

**A Proposed Typology for Paedophilia: A Grounded Theory Analysis  
of Online Discourse.**

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## **Abstract**

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a human rights issue of interest to both science and society. Many CSA offenders are paedophiles. It follows that a thorough understanding of paedophilia is apposite. Unfortunately, there is disagreement in the literature about paedophilia. This may be because the group is not homogenous. To address this, studies have attempted to construct typologies. However, these suffered from methodological limitations including participant-dishonesty, difficulty in maintaining participant anonymity, small sample sizes and the tendency of clinicians to influence data.

The current study attempts to address these. It examines a population of self-identified paedophiles who operated under a high degree of anonymity on a pair of websites (the “Pedophile Support Community”, and “Hurt 2 the Core”) that were hidden on the “dark internet” and accessible only via the anonymizing web browser “TOR”. The study qualitatively analyses participant discussions. Using the principles of grounded theory, it attempts to describe, compare and contrast the two sites’ users, with a view to identifying taxonomic distinctions. Most members of the first site used the platform to construct an identity, using cognitive distortions, that was more favourable to them than the one imposed by society. This was largely informed by the notion that child sexual abuse needn’t be harmful. Others eschewed child sexual abuse, preferring to satisfy their urges by viewing indecent images of children. These subtypes contrast to those who occupied the second site, who sought to enact both paedophilic and sadistic fantasies. The attitudes and actions of the sites’ participants led to the construction of a proposed typology of potential child abusers.

A distinction between ‘pedosexuals’ and ‘pedosadists’ is proposed. Whilst both are attracted to children, the latter is specifically aroused on the basis of violence (or thoughts of violence) against children, whilst the former explicitly is not. This distinction has implications for societal responses, vis a vis treatment, legal measures and theory.

### **Declaration**

I declare that “A Proposed Typology for Paedophilia: A Grounded Theory Analysis of Online Discourse” is my own work. All resources and materials that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of references.

Signed by candidate

October 2019

*Andrew Verrijdt*

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Problem Area**

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a human rights issue of great interest both to science and society as a whole (Richter & Dawes, 2008; Bowman, 2010). While not all CSA is committed by paedophiles (Schmidt, Mokros & Banse, 2013), a significant percentage is. Additionally, there are a number of challenges facing researchers attempting to determine how many sexual offenders with child victims have paedophilic interests (Wiederman, 2002. Kennedy & Grubin, 1992. Roese & Jamieson, 1993. Seto, 2004). Results from studies attempting to address this question have shown that paedophiles make up between 40% and 50% of adult sexual offenders with child victims (Seto & Lalumière, 2001. Maletzky & Steinhauser, 2002. Blanchard, Klassen, Dickey, Kuban & Blak, 2001). Nonetheless it seems clear that an understanding of what constitutes paedophilia and paedophiles is needed to tackle the issue of CSA effectively (Beier, Ahlers, Goecker, Neutze, Mundt, Hupp & Schaefer, 2009). Unfortunately, the current research literature is not without its limitations (Socia & Harris, 2016). There is no consensus regarding the meaning of paedophilia or what constitutes a paedophile. This naturally has a deleterious impact on society's ability to respond to CSA.

This thesis is an attempt to bring greater clarity to the scientific literature relating to paedophilia. More specifically this study aims to examine whether paedophiles constitute a homogenous group or whether it is possible to identify subcategories. Such an examination could impact areas such as the diagnosis and treatment of CSA offenders (Knight and Prentky, 1990). A number of studies with similar aims have been undertaken (Cohen, Seghorn and Calmas, 1969. Knight and Prentky, 1990. Knight and Prentky, 1990b. Looman, 2001 Bechett, Beech, Fisher, & Fordham, 1994. Bickley and Beech, 2001. Schlank, 1995. Ward and Hudson, 1998. Prentky, 1999. Saleh et al., 2010. Beech and Harkins, 2012. Babchishin, Hanson, and VanZuylen, 2015), yet certain methodological limitations invite further research. Some of these limitations are discussed in detail below. This thesis has been designed in an attempt to fill the gap created by such limitations. This has been done through an analysis of discussions on websites for paedophiles that were situated on the so-called 'darknet'.

## **1.2 The Problem of Child Sexual Abuse**

Child sexual abuse is an area of grave social concern. It is widespread, occurring across all cultures and times. The effects of this abuse are myriad, often leading to psychological trauma for victims which is persistent and relationally damaging throughout their lives (Oshri et al., 2015; Trickett et al., 2013; Matthews & Colin-Vézina, 2017). Feelings of shame, erosion of trust, sexual dysfunctionality, increased risk of neuroticism, psychosis and borderline tendencies are frequently associated with survivors of childhood sexual abuse. In extreme instances, victims may be physically assaulted to such a degree as to be permanently incapacitated or killed (Jenny and Isaac, 2006). General thinking holds that it is an especially egregious crime, since the victims are almost by definition far less powerful than the perpetrators and less able to process the effects of the abuse upon themselves. Likewise, CSA almost necessarily enforces premature sexual exploration upon the victim, which typically constitutes a compromise of a victim's psychological integrity (Goode, 2009).

## **1.3 Paedophiles and Child Sexual Abuse**

It is important to point out that not all CSA is perpetrated by people who self-identify as paedophiles, or even by individuals who are independently identified as paedophiles (Schmidt, Mokros & Banse, 2013). This may initially seem counter intuitive, since the sexual use of a child would suggest a proclivity towards viewing children as objects of sexual desire, but in many instances, CSA is linked to alcohol, drugs, psychosis etc., and perpetrators are quite frequently found to have no general interest in children sexually. Consequently, they fail to meet the criterion for paedophilia, and can be regarded as child sexual offenders, or child molesters, rather than paedophiles per se. Non-paedophilic perpetrators of CSA have frequently been found to have low impulse control (DiChristina, 2009; Kärger et al., 2016), or to be subject to some agent (stress, alcohol, drugs etc.) which disinhibits them (Finkelhor and Araji, 1986).

There is however, a demonstrable connection between sexual offenders with child victims and paedophilic interests (Seto & Lalumière, 2001. Maletzky & Steinhauser, 2002. Blanchard, Klassen, Dickey, Kuban & Blak, 2001). Studies have shown that paedophiles make up between 40% and 50% of adult sexual offenders with child victims (Seto & Lalumière, 2001. Maletzky & Steinhauser, 2002. Blanchard, Klassen, Dickey, Kuban & Blak, 2001). It is also worth noting that research into CSA tends to focus on paedophiles and the nature of

paedophilia. Often such research suffers, however, from a lack of clarity and consensus as to what paedophilia actually is.

#### **1.4 Defining Paedophilia**

There is significant disagreement in the literature as to what constitutes Paedophilia, despite numerous efforts to define it. These attempts will be described in detail in the next chapter. Given the breadth of definitions, and considering the nature of this work, it would seem that the DSM is a good point of departure, especially given the significance of its role in diagnosis generally. According to the DSM5, “Pedophilic disorder is described as an individual having recurrent, intense, sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviours involving sexual activity with children 13 years or younger. The individual is at least 16 years and at least 5 years older than the victim/s”. This definition has attracted much criticism (Beech, Minor, Thornton 2016 p. 389) and this will be examined in the following chapter. Reports of CSA, both in the general media and even in legal and medical literature, frequently conflate terms - and ‘Molester’, ‘Paedophile’ and ‘Child Abuser’ are frequently used synonymously or interchangeably in legal reports on CSA, and even in medical and psychological research (Harrison, 2007). Consequently, a conflation exists in the public understanding, and to some extent even an academic understanding, of CSA. Another problem is that paedophilia, perhaps on account of its prevalence within public discourse and culture, is often thought of in rather simplistic terms. However, this belies the complex nature of the phenomenon. Perhaps the greatest contributor to the blunt view of paedophilia is what can be called the ‘monster’ narrative of paedophilia. Popular culture and media report on paedophilia in a way which is arguably singular, typically portraying offenders as irredeemable ‘monsters’ or “predators”. The language typically used to describe paedophiles and paedophilia is perhaps unique, with research indicating that no other crime or criminals (not even violent killers and serial killers) are as marginalized and dehumanized as are paedophiles (Jahnke, Imhoff, and Hoyer, 2014. Imhoff, 2014). The “monster” narrative includes notions that such individuals will necessarily try and offend, and that there is no cure for the condition (neither conclusion of which is borne out by study).

Whilst the moral outrage at paedophilia makes some sense, given the almost inevitably deleterious consequences of it being acted upon, it is peculiarly blunt and lacking in gradation or nuance. Arguably, for this reason, even within academia there sometimes seems a reluctance

to discuss or research the phenomenon. Numerous prominent researchers into paedophilia have stopped work in the field, in some instances due to personal discomfort and in other cases due to the difficult reception their work has seemed to receive (Goode, 2011). Nonetheless, valuable academic contributions toward the phenomenon have been made, as have attempts at a definition. Whilst none appear entirely adequate or devoid of criticism, it is salient that they be discussed.

A central critique of much paedophile research is that the group is often treated as homogenous (Grubin, 1998; Hollin & Howells, 1991; Marshall, 1997; Prentky, 1999) whilst even a cursory examination of the phenomenon shows offenders to be decidedly heterogenous. Perpetrators of CSA generally, and paedophiles in particular, come from all classes, socio-economic strata, genders and cultures. Whilst there are some general tendencies as to who is more likely to be a paedophile (e.g. male paedophiles are vastly more common than female ones, paedophiles tend to report higher feelings of isolation and loneliness, tend to be of below average intelligence etc. (Fisher, Beech, Browne, 1999; Matthews & Colin-Vézina 2017) these remain no more than trends. Likewise, paedophiles display evidently different behaviours, including in instances and manner of offence. It seems, therefore, that any intelligent scrutiny of the subject necessarily needs to consider the group as a more heterogenous one, and the phenomenon itself as multi-faceted.

## **1.5 Typologies**

Consequently, researchers have frequently found that paedophiles can, in fact, more meaningfully be thought of as belonging to different groups. Typologies of paedophiles have been proposed since at least the 1960s, with further research throughout the 90s particularly categorizing offenders according to variables that seem to offer both explanatory power and higher degrees of phenomenological verisimilitude. Cohen, Seghorn and Calmas' research of 1969 taxonomically divided offenders into three general categories, namely the Fixated, Regressed and Aggressive. Knight and Prentky (1990) examined both rapists and child molesters, and aside from endorsing the previously mentioned 'fixated' and 'regressed' categories divided offenders into eight possible categories (also taking into account offence style and physical injury groups). Still more recently, Ward and Hudson (1998) propose the "Self-Regulatory Model of the offense process" which has proved influential both in terms of categorization and treatment of offenders. Their work reports that sharp distinctions are evident

between offenders, and consequently divide offenders into discreet groups (Approach / Avoidance, and Active / Passive). Overall, divisions between offenders seem to be made based on 4 processes: Clinical descriptions, Demographic clusters, Psychometric Profiles, and finally theory-driven groups i.e. distinctions are made on the basis of features central to a germane theory (Bickley Beech 2001).

However, the field is fraught with methodological constraints and pitfalls – and consequently even the most lauded studies attract reasonable criticism and concern vis a vis their conclusions. Though these innate research constraints cannot be entirely overcome, it is apposite to consider some central ones in an effort to at least partially ameliorate central research concerns.

### **1.6 Shortcomings of Current research**

Given the nature of paedophilia, socially and legally, several problems immediately emerge when trying to study it. Four especially prominent ones include the maintenance of participant anonymity (when there may be a legal and / or ethical conflict), a related incentive for participants to lie (also known as ‘faking good’), small sample sizes, and clinician bias. Ethical research typically demands that participants, unless they otherwise state, need be kept anonymous. The more detrimental the effects of breaking such anonymity would be upon the lives of participants, the more crucial it is to maintain it (Sugiura, Wiles & Pope 2016; Daval et al. 2018). There are legitimately dire (potential) legal and social consequences to identifying someone as paedophilic or possessed of paedophilic tendencies. Indeed, even a somewhat tangential association with paedophilia has been shown to have detrimental social effects (Jahnke, Imhoff, and Hoyer, 2014, so much so that even victims tend to desire anonymity. Perpetrators face the real probability of legal recourse should any illegal behaviours become known, whether in the form of lengthened sentences, if already incarcerated, or prosecution, if they have not already been.

Equally, however, a researcher has an ethical responsibility to report possible action on the part of a participant which it may reasonably be presumed will lead to harm (Sugiura, Wiles & Pope 2016; Daval et al. 2018). In the case of paedophiles, open and frank discussion of personal fantasies and desires would very often constitute such a reasonable threat of harm. This, naturally, compromises the researcher’s capacity to both maintain the privacy of the

participant and meet the ethical standard of protecting others from possible harm. The tension which the researcher has in this situation is mirrored in the participants themselves, who likewise have a very strong incentive to lie.

In many fields of research, participants have some incentive to make themselves look better in some way – or to ‘fake good’ as it is described in literature (Bickley and Beech, 2001). This is particularly true of a phenomenon such as paedophilia, in which a frank disclosure of one’s activities and fantasies may lead to the kind of legal and social sanction mentioned above. This is a particularly potent problem when one considers that many of the studies into paedophilia take place in clinical settings, where offenders are already serving some kind of time or undergoing various treatment procedures. This, compounds the already significant issue of clinician bias in conducting such research.

When research is gathered in a clinical setting, it is necessary to consider the influence that the setting and ideology of the researching clinician may have upon findings (Feelgood, 2008). In the case of paedophilia, which often attracts strong moral condemnation and judgment from people, clinicians’ and researchers’ resolve to remain neutral and objective may be especially stretched. Such settings tend to have innate power imbalances too, with participants being institutionally disempowered and especially incentivized to look as good as possible. Adding this power-dynamic to theoretical preconceptions, as well as possible institutional / ethical dilemmas, mean that it is reasonable enough to presume that clinicians may sway participants’ accounts of their experiences (albeit that this is often done unwittingly).

Finally, presumably in part on account of some of the concerns above, sample sizes for studies into paedophilia are frequently small, which makes their generalizability and reliability more questionable. Even some of the most influential studies include very small participant figures (e.g. Killman et al. 1982, n=11; Ward & Hudson, 1998b, n=26), which naturally calls into question the degree to which any conclusions can be taken to be generalizable to the population more broadly.

Some research has been conducted on the internet to sidestep some of these issues (Goode, 2009; Goode, 2011; Babchishin, Hanson, and VanZuylen, 2015). Since the internet allows greater anonymity for participants, it is an environment that is arguably more conducive to fuller disclosure (certainly when discussing such potentially embarrassing matters as personal paedophilic tendencies). Likewise, discourse observed on the internet can be viewed from a distance rather than actively interacted with, as most clinical interviews would do, which

goes some ways to minimize clinician bias. It also provides an opportunity to potentially sample from a larger group of individuals, outside of the institutional-settings (prisons / clinics / treatment centres) that are commonest for paedophilia research.

### **1.7 Salient Research Shortcomings in Typology Research**

The problems highlighted in the previous headings (anonymity, ethical conflicts, ‘faking good’, clinician bias and sample size) apply to virtually all aspects of paedophile research, but perhaps especially to the idea of typologies. Whilst most researchers agree that appropriate responses (societal, legal, psychological, treatment etc.) to paedophilia demand an accurate understanding of subsets (Knight and Prentky 1990; Ward and Beech, Looman, 2001; Bickley and Beech, 2001), presuming that these do in fact exist, the sorts of delicate phenomenological data required to make such discriminations is that much harder to come by, given the constraints mentioned above.

This perhaps accounts for some of the inconsistencies commonly cited within descriptions of, and research into, paedophilia. For instance, certain groups of paedophiles are found to be much more likely to reoffend and be resistant to current treatment methodologies (Ward and Hudson 1998; Thornton 2002). It is entirely plausible that if different kinds of paedophile do exist, or if the phenomenon consists of various different underlying processes, that certain treatments will prove ineffective when used with certain offenders (Ward and Hudson 1998b, Bickley and Beech, Looman 2001).

Furthermore, “Given the considerable financial constraints faced by many treatment facilities, a major aim of an effective classification system should be to inform the adequate targeting of interventions to make the best use of these limited funds. The ability to tailor treatment to the specific needs of distinct groups of offenders would certainly ensure the most effective use of clinical resources” (Bickley & Beech, 2001, p. 65).

### **1.8 The Current Challenge**

This presents an evident difficulty: For the sake of minimizing both the effects and incidents of CSA, one must understand and treat Paedophilia as comprehensively as possible. This demands a three-dimensional understanding of the phenomena, which one can reasonably



presume is an heterogeneous one in which offenders can more meaningfully be classed into different offense types. Failing to understand any underlying characteristics and typologies that may exist will, presumably, likely lead to failures in treatment attempts, and yet the difficulty of assessing what those types are is compounded by various research constraints imposed by the very nature of the phenomenon.

Nonetheless, it seems essential to try and establish whether different kinds of offenders do exist, and whether there are diagnostically valuable typologies that can be observed within the paedophile-population. Doing this in a manner that bypasses as many of the cited research constraints as possible would seem to be a valuable endeavour. It therefore seems of urgency to be able to study the population in a setting which is more likely to solicit honest information vis a vis paedophilia, where there is not an innate power imbalance between researcher and participants, where there is a disincentive to 'fake good', where anonymity is easier to maintain, where sample size can be comparatively large, and where both ethical conflict and clinician interference / bias can be kept to a minimum. The current study aims to do just that.

## **1.9 The Current Study**

The current study aims to elicit honest accounts from self-identified paedophiles, and then to analyse these accounts in order to see whether or not different types of paedophile are in fact identifiable. The means by which it intends to prompt such accounts is through an analysis of online discourse between participants who self-identify as paedophiles. Major online forums, available covertly on 'the dark net', will be used. These forums serve as support-networks for paedophiles, and it is possible to observe discussions between participants in a somewhat distanced manner, which serves to minimize the potential contamination of data through researcher bias. Anonymity is virtually guaranteed due to the nature of the forums, and there appears to be no overt or inherent power imbalance on such forums. Participants function in an ostensibly egalitarian environment, in which contribution is easy, fluid and largely non-judgmental.

Since these forums function ostensibly as supportive communities, social incentives (for once) are toward paedophiles being as transparent as possible, so as to receive validation, garner support, solicit advice and share personal experiences. With few outlets to express these desires safely, many members of such forums are drawn to them specifically so as to express

such taboos clearly. Likewise, such forums consist of comparatively large numbers of participants, certainly when contrasted to clinical or therapeutic settings.

### **1.10 Implications of the Current Study**

The hope is that by using such an approach, a large amount of phenomenologically reliable and salient data can be obtained so as to more accurately probe the question as to whether different subtypes or typologies of paedophile exist. In so doing, suggestions may be advanced as to why certain treatment methods either do, or do not, prove effective with offenders. Overall, the intention is to advance the understanding of paedophilia as a phenomenon so as to lead to best response practices and contribute toward societal safety and well-being.

### **1.11 Research Aim and Research Questions**

Being a grounded theory study, the research is necessarily rather open as to what may be discovered in the analysis of the online discourse. Broadly then, a general aim is “to see what themes emerge as being of import to participants”. Nonetheless, having identified obvious gaps in the literature does indicate that a very obvious aim deserves close scrutiny. This constitutes the research question, as follows: “Are there evident typological differences between the manifestations of paedophilic-paraphilia, as reported by self-identifying and professing paedophiles?”

### **1.12 Conclusion**

Given the damaging effects of CSA on victims and society as a whole, it follows that an understanding of Paedophilia is an important goal both in terms of treatment regimens and legal responses to the phenomenon. Although not all CSA is committed by Paedophiles, they do account for a portion of offenders. Unfortunately, the very meaning of Paedophilia is highly contested. No entirely satisfactory psychiatric, legal or social definition has yet been proposed. One of the reasons for this may be that regarding Paedophilia as an homogenous phenomenon is ill-conceived.

Consequently, various attempts have been made to formulate a taxonomy for Paedophilia. These studies have, in fact, gone some way to showing that certain broad categories of paedophile appear to exist. However, these studies suffer from various methodological limitations, including ethical concerns, sample sizes and clinician bias. Perhaps most specifically of all, study participants are likely to be untruthful and to ‘fake good’, considering the legal implications surrounding any admission of CSA and the general societal condemnation of Paedophiles.

A study of an anonymous Paedophile online discussion forum obviates many of these concerns, and therefore may well go some way to bridging the theoretical gap existing in current literature and research. In the next chapter I review the literature more deeply, in an attempt to make more explicit the gaps that exist both theoretically and practically. In so doing, I believe the value of the current proposed study is made clearer as well.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The scope of the literature on the topic is broad, and so by necessity this thesis concentrates on especially salient aspects. It begins by explaining not only the social and psychological harm of CSA, but also the social narratives that are created around CSA. This narrative is fuelled by the media, as well as an interaction between existent cultural views and political mores and agendas (themselves informed by legal approaches to the problem of CSA). An understanding of this social construction and consequent social reality is needed, so as to understand the context in which research operates and in which the participants exist.

This understanding is in turn needed so as to consider what appropriate social and therapeutic responses can be made. An understanding of the social construction around paedophilia allows us to consider, hopefully with a greater utility, how treatment of individuals reporting paedophilic impulses, or who are guilty of paedophilic acts, may proceed. In this sense ‘treatment’ refers not only to therapeutic treatment, but also legal and social responses towards such individuals. Likewise, the sensitive matter of reintegrating these individuals into society in a manner which is both humane and safe is important. With this in mind, the study now gives some overview of these germane points.

### **2.2 The Problem of Child Sexual Abuse**

CSA is a highly prevalent phenomenon internationally with about 12% of adults alleging that they were sexually abused as a child (Stoltenborgh, van IJzendoorn, Euser & Bakemans-Kranenburg, 2011). It has also been shown that only around 64% of suspected alleged victims of CSA choose to disclose in clinical settings (London et al., (2005); Lamb et al., 2007; Azzopardi, Eirich, Rash, MacDonald & Madigan, 2018). In terms of those who choose not to disclose, only a minority are considered to lack credibility in terms of their accounts (Azzopardi, Eirich, Rash, MacDonald & Madigan, 2018). Victims of CSA are more likely to suffer from various mental and physical problems and failing to report CSA is associated with a heightened risk of these health sequelae (Bonanno et al., 2009). These health problems include, anxiety (Briere, 1984; Sedney & Brooks (1984), posttraumatic stress disorder, dissociative problems and depression (Bonanno, Noll, Putnam, O’Neill, & Trickett, 2003; Hérbert et al., 2009) Further, victims of CSA more often i) become victims of further physical

and sexual abuse; ii) become involved with an abusive partner; iii) become a teen mother and; iv) have a premature baby (Trickett, Noll & Putnam, 2011). They are also more likely to engage in self-mutilation, suicide (Briere, 1984), risky sexual activity, abuse drugs and alcohol, experience more lifetime traumas, and fail to complete high school (Trickett, Noll & Putnam, 2011). As parents, they place their children at increased risk for abuse and neglect and overall maldevelopment as they repeat generational patterns of abuse, neglect, and family dysfunction (Goodwin, McCarthy, and Divasto (1981); Trickett, Noll & Putnam, 2011). There is also evidence of immune system dysfunction as well as evidence for increased levels of catecholamines (Trickett, Noll & Putnam, 2011). Victims of CSA also have significantly higher levels of somatic symptoms reporting more medical visits, major illnesses and hospitalizations (Trickett, Noll & Putnam, 2011). Victims of CSA have also been shown to have higher rates of criminality (Freyd et al., 2004).

It is thus clear that CSA is a human rights issue of great interest both to science and society as a whole (Richter & Dawes, 2008; Bowman, 2010) and while not all sexual abuse of children is committed by paedophiles a significant percentage of offenders are members of that group (Schmidt, Mokros & Banse, 2013). A greater understanding of paedophilia is therefore needed if we are to tackle the issue of CSA effectively (Beier, Ahlers, Goecker, Neutze, Mundt, Hupp and Schaefer, 2009). There are certain obstacles to a clearer understanding of the phenomenon, including the way in which paedophilia is dealt with in both the media and politics, together with public perceptions (which is both informed by, and informs, the former).

### **2.3 The Media, Public Perception, and Politics**

The media's coverage of paedophilia, the public perception of it, and the political responses to it all influence our understanding of the phenomenon (Goode, 2009). Media coverage of cases of child sexual abuse (CSA) has been steadily increasing since the start of the century (Ducat, Thomas & Blood, 2009). Contemporary reporting on cases relating to child sexual abuse can dominate news coverage for months at a time (Goode, 2009). Public perception of paedophilia is greatly influenced by this coverage, together with CSA related films, documentaries and TV series. However, the media's coverage of CSA is out of proportion with its actual prevalence. Indeed, decreasing numbers of reported CSA have at times coincided with increased news coverage (Ducat, Thomas, & Blood, 2009).

Contemporary reportage often tends to focus on exceptional cases to the exclusion of the majority. The news media often focus their attention on those cases that seem the most shocking. There are a few factors that appear to be most significant in determining how much attention the news media will pay to a particular case. These factors include cases where the victim was younger; there were multiple victims; the abuse took place over a long period of time; the victim was abducted; the abuser had previously been arrested and then released; the victim was not known to the perpetrator; and cases where extreme violence occurred (Meyer, 2007; Ducat, Thomas & Blood, 2009; Holt, Blevins & Burkert, 2010; Galeste, Fradella & Vogel, 2012).

Epstein and Steinberg (2007) state that news stories about CSA and paedophilia are deliberately constructed to be frightening or disgusting because this increases viewership. Additionally, it has been argued that the manner in which paedophilia is characterised in the media has less to do with empirical evidence relating to the phenomenon and more to do with benefiting certain power structures (Socia & Harris, 2016). It has been argued that people receive some form of satisfaction from being exposed to stories of this type and the media obliges by providing them (Epstein and Steinberg, 2007; Hunter, 2008). The narrow focus that reporting on CSA often exhibits has led to the emergence of the popular construction of the paedophile as an incurable, insatiable, dangerous, and manipulative individual who is very much unlike the viewer or reader. In addition, the media's narrow treatment of the topic has resulted in drives in favour of harsher punishments for child sexual abusers (Galeste, Fradella & Vogel, 2012). The popular understanding of paedophiles as untreatable, however is not accurate, as various treatment modalities have been shown to be effective (Gerardin & Thibaut, 2004; Kärgel et al., 2016). Yet, these possibilities have largely remained outside the public discourse and have done little to diminish the widespread acceptance of the "paedophile as monster" construction.

They are figuratively, and indeed sometimes literally, described as being monstrous (Holt, Blevins, & Burkert 2010). Indeed, individuals who attempt to challenge this construction are sometimes accused of being "supportive" of child sexual abuse (Kleinplatz & Moser, 2005). These many factors have combined to create a social environment that is actively hostile, not simply to child sexual abusers, or even paedophiles, but to the idea of paedophilia itself. All of this has led to active debate about whether the media's treatment of child sexual abuse, and the public's response to it, constitute a "moral panic". A moral panic can be said to occur when a state of being, group of people, or period of time come to be perceived as being

a threat to dominant social or cultural values (Cohen, 1973). A key aspect of a moral panic is that it may involve a genuine danger, but the response to that danger is disproportionate, misguided, or directed at targets whose construction appears to be largely fictional.

Bray (2008), however, criticises the application of the term moral panic to this state of affairs, arguing that applying that term implies that there is a level of appropriate outrage and a level of inappropriate outrage, without a full explanation of where the difference lies. Bray asks that we consider the possibility that society is right to be outraged by truly outrageous events, such as CSA. However, Jewkes and Wykes (2012) argue that the combination of inaccurate portrayals of paedophilia and child sexual abuse in newspapers, television, film, and other mass media, together with the legislative responses that have likewise tended towards hysteria, have led to a situation in which the dominant discursive construction of the paedophile is one that has little in common with reality. Whether levels of outrage are justified or not should be secondary to the question of whether the media and society are engaged in discourses that are based in fact or not, and the case appears to be the latter (Socia & Harris, 2016).

In addition to the media, there are also political figures who use child sexual abuse as a convenient means to gain support or pass laws. “Megan’s Law” was passed in the United States in response to the tragic abduction and murder of a young girl, Megan Kanka. The law requires that the public be kept informed about the presence of convicted sexual offenders. The question of whether such laws effectively prevent CSA is unresolved at present, however the popularity of the law is due in part to the widespread media coverage of Megan Kanka’s death (Galeste, Fradella & Vogel, 2012).

A number of legislative responses to CSA have been misguided, in that they target groups whose role in CSA is over-shadowed by that of others. For example, repeat offenders make up a relatively small percentage of sexual offenders (Harvard, 2004; Hunter, 2008) but they have been the target of much legislation (Harrison, 2010). Similarly, so-called “stranger danger” (sexual assault by someone that the child does not know) was previously considered to be a major part of child sexual abuse (Moran, Warden, Macleod, Mayes & Gillies, 1997). However, we now know that most child sexual assault occurs in the home and is committed either by close family members, or their acquaintances (Hayes & Carpenter, 2013). Furthermore, legislative responses to CSA often do not target the more common forms of child abuse such as incest or neglect, and other forms of abuse that occur within the home (Ullman, 2007). This calls into question these laws’ rationale. Perhaps they persist, less because they

protect children and more because they fulfil the needs of politics and public perception (Socia & Harris, 2016). This, however, almost necessarily means an alienation and stigmatisation of paedophiles as a group. Erving Goffman (1963) has done extensive work studying populations who can be regarded as “stigmatised” by society. It would certainly appear, in light of the discussion above, that paedophiles appear to fall into this category.

## **2.4 The Impact of Social Stigma on Paedophiles**

Goffman argues that with all people, whether stigmatised or not, there is a disjunction between how society perceives them and how they perceive themselves (Goffman, 1963). He refers to this as the difference between “virtual” and “actual” social identities (Goffman, 1963). undesirable (Goffman, 1963). In this context, it’s important to note that the terms “paedophile” and “child sexual abuser” are often conflated, both in the media and in academic texts. While this is discussed in more detail below, suffice it to say that admitting that one has the paraphilia is often tantamount to admitting that one is guilty of CSA (Socia & Harris, 2016). While writers have opined that paedophiles are otherwise ordinary men and women who happen to have a sexual attraction to children, they know that they are perceived as monsters (Goode, 2009).

This often unqualified and automatic vilification is significant because it means that paedophiles are less likely than others to seek professional help. This is problematic because research suggests that a lack of support makes paedophiles more likely to act on their urges and begin abusing (Beier et al., 2012). It seems possible that this is due to the fact that resisting the urge to abuse a child requires presence of mind and willpower. To put it simply stressful situations and a lack of emotional support make controlling oneself more difficult (Finkelhor and Araji, 1986). Not only does this pose a rather ironic threat, but there is the further complicating factor that understanding who constitutes a paedophile, and in what ways they do, is sometimes difficult to accurately determine because of classification pluralism.

## **2.5 Classification Pluralism**

According to Harrison, Manning and McCartan (2010) there is no generally accepted, multi-disciplinary definition of paedophilia. People who molest children or who are at risk of molesting children are most frequently described as either “child molesters” or “paedophiles” (Feelgood and Hoyer, 2008). The two terms represent the sociolegal and psychopathological



conceptions of the phenomenon (Ames & Houston, 1990). The two sometimes overlap, since a child molester can also be a paedophile and vice versa, however they do not have identical meanings and are not wholly interchangeable (Harrison, Manning and McCartan, 2010). For example, there are child molesters who do not have a strong, ongoing sexual interest in children and there are also paedophiles who never commit CSA.

The term “child molester” is often used to describe a person who has committed CSA. What constitutes CSA is a legal question and differs according to jurisdiction and era. In other words what constitutes a child molester and CSA will differ depending on time and place. On the other hand, the term “paedophile” is typically applied to people who have a sexual interest, or preference in pre-pubescent children, independent of their actions (APA, 2000; WHO, 1993). Feelgood and Hoyer (2008) state that a diagnosis of paedophilic disorder necessarily implies a level of dysfunction. The fact that this is not always the case, however, can be evidenced by referencing those versions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) that allow for a diagnosis to be made, regardless of whether a patient experiences any distress (APA, 2000). Such conceptions of paedophilia lean towards a sociolegal, rather than a psychopathological conception of the term.

The varied and inconsistent use of disparate sociolegal and psychopathological terminology has led some commentators to suggest that the literature around CSA suffers from definitional and diagnostic confusion (Okami and Goldberg, 1992 p. 302). A systematic review by Feelgood and Hoyer (2008) of CSA research across multiple disciplines affirmed that proposition. The writers found that studies made use of wide array of differing approaches to the subject and conflated terminology, resulting in a blurring of conceptual boundaries. For example, they found that the terms “paedophilia”, “child sexual abuser” and even “sex offender” were sometimes used interchangeably, even though the different terms can mean very different things. Feelgood and Hoyer (2008) also found that a significant number of studies made use of the term “paedophile” to describe sociolegal samples. Given that the generalization of findings is a basic aim of scientific endeavor (Popper, 1959), this classification pluralism undermines the value of this research field (Harrison, Manning and McCartan, 2010). Notwithstanding the conflation of CSA with paedophilia, given that a portion of adults who sexually abuse children are paedophiles (Seto, 2004) it would seem that understanding paedophilia is a necessary step in responding to child sexual abuse. Unsurprisingly, given this, the DSM attempts to provide a definition of paedophilia.

## 2.6 The DSM

Paedophilia made its first appearance in the second edition of the DSM where it was considered part of the broad category of “sexual deviance” (APA, 1968). It was placed alongside homosexuality, fetishism, transvestism, exhibitionism, voyeurism, sadism and masochism (APA 1968). In the DSM-III paedophilia was reclassified as a type of “paraphilia” and could be diagnosed where patients had sexual fantasies about children or engaged in sexual acts with them (APA, 1980). Blanchard (2010 rightly points out that at the time, sexual acts were seen as signs of paedophilia. In fact, using the DSM-III criteria, a person could be diagnosed solely on the basis of having engaged in CSA; they need not have experienced any sexual attraction towards children. It thus seems fair to state that at the time paedophilia was seen through a sociolegal rather than a psychopathological lens.

This situation did not prevail and in DSM-III-R, paedophilia could only be diagnosed where two benchmarks were met (APA, 1987). Criterion A consisted of recurrent, intense sexual urges and sexually arousing fantasies about children over a period of at least 6 months; and criterion B stated that patients must have acted on these urges or experienced marked distress (APA 1987). This meant that although a person couldn’t be diagnosed without their having experienced sexual attraction to children, they could be without having felt any distress. In response to this anomaly (De Block and Adriaens, 2013), in the DSM-IV, the first part of criteria B was omitted. This can be considered a wholly psychopathological approach in that distress became a necessary criteria for a diagnosis to be made. Following the publication of the DSM-IV, however, conservative religious groups complained vociferously that paedophilia should be considered a mental illness, regardless of whether distress flowed from the urges and fantasies. This led to a further revision of manual, the DSM-IV-TR, which reintroduced the DSM-III-R’s diagnostic criteria, for the specific paraphilia, including paedophilia (APA, 2000). The manual states that an offender has to be at least 16 years old; must be at least five years older than the victim; that the victim should not older than 12 or 13 years; and, that the offender has serious sexual urges or fantasies that are either causing them distress or that they have acted on (APA, 2000: 571–2). Prior to the publication of the most recent manual, the DSM-5, the APA’s Sexual and Gender Identity Disorders Workgroup proposed a change to Criterion A as well as the inclusion of certain specifiers relating to Paedophilic Disorder (Zucker, 2013). However, the APA’s Board of Trustees opted not to adopt the suggested changes. Zucker (2013) points out in DSM-5, the diagnostic criteria for Paedophilic Disorder therefore remain unchanged from DSM-IV-TR.

This treatment of the paedophilia has been the subject of much criticism. For instance, Harrison, Manning, and MaCartan (2010) point out that it does not define exactly what is meant by “acted on” (Harrison, Manning, and MaCartan, 2010). The authors argue that this could include a number of non-contact actions, for instance, downloading indecent images of children (IIOC) or communicating online with other paedophiles about fantasies (Harrison, Manning, and MaCartan, 2010). In addition, they point out that the particular ages that are stipulated are not necessarily in keeping with general societal consensus or with ideas in other areas such as legal circles (Harrison, Manning, and MaCartan, 2010).

Malon (2012) goes further, arguing that there are fundamental inconsistencies within the diagnosis of paedophilia. The author points out that if the diagnosis of paedophilic disorder is intended to protect vulnerable individuals like children, or society in general, then this is a very different proposition to the stated purpose behind other psychopathological diagnoses. Malon contends that the principal purpose behind a diagnosis of mental illness should be therapeutic: to help the individual to whom the diagnosis is applied. The aim, as Malon says, is to assist against harm to the individual and not to protect society from dangers that the individual may manifest. That act is typically left up to police, not clinicians. If person harms another because of an intense delusion then the harm they have caused may be a crime, but it is not incorporated into any diagnosis that is applied to them. Moser (2009) agrees arguing that while an unusual sexual interest may be a significant factor in a larger problem (as is the case with child sexual abuse) it is that larger problem that should be the focus of legal attention, not the sexual interest. They point out that many sex crimes, rape for example, are not matched to psychopathological diagnoses. Indeed, the attempt by some researchers to create a diagnosis for rapists, “paraphilic coercive disorder” (Stern, 2010), was rejected by the DSM committee. Likewise, most paraphilias do not constitute crimes: transvestic fetishism, masochism, and even sadism are not crimes unless other laws are broken. Moser argues that it is unclear why paedophilia should be the exception or why harm to another person should constitute psychopathology. Some argue that the solution is to alter the diagnosis completely and classify any adult who is found to have engaged in sexual contact between themselves and a child as a paedophile (O’Donohue, 2010).

However, this approach has also been criticised by a number of researchers who maintain that there are individuals who are convicted of CSA but do not appear to have paedophilic disorder. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that a significant portion of child sexual abuse is committed by people who do not have paedophilia (Schmidt, Mokros & Banse,

2013). In other words, there are sexual abusers of children who cannot be shown to have any sustained desire to engage in sexual activity with children specifically. Instead, they seem to have acted out of curiosity, because they were influenced by narcotics, or simply because they had access to a vulnerable child and to no one else (Carlstedt, Innala, Brimse & Soderstrom, 2005; Feelgood & Hoyer, 2008).

More broadly, the DSM's approach to the classification of paedophilia has been subjected to criticism that has persisted across multiple editions of the manual. These criticisms cover a number of issues including the view that this classification both poses methodological problems for psychological practitioners and lacks empirical justification (Feelgood & Hoyer, 2008; Blanchard, 2010). In fact, the DSM diagnosis' lack of clarity and utility has led to many clinicians choosing not to use the DSM criteria when working with paedophiles (Seto, 2004; Harrison et al, 2010). Further, writers such as Foucault (1976), Plummer (1995), Weeks (1989), and Howitt (1992) have provided additional attacks on the diagnosis tool. Their perspectives differ but a unifying theme is the idea that human sexuality is a social construction and must be understood as such. Some researchers attempt to resolve these diagnostic difficulties by creating less subjective means of separating individuals with paedophilic disorder from child sexual offenders (CSOs) who do not have paedophilic disorder. These measurement tools, which attempt greater objectivity, will now be discussed briefly.

## **2.7 Diagnostic Instruments and Measures.**

There are a number of different approaches to this task. Self-report measures are the most widely used but they can be unreliable. The memory of the individual taking the measure may be inaccurate and there is also often a large incentive to lie or "fake good", particularly in forensic situations (Mokros, Dombert, Osterheider, Zappala & Santtila, 2010).

Similarly, phallometry, the measuring of penile responses to erotic stimuli, is not without limitations, even though it remains widely used (Seto, 2004). If performed correctly phallometry has been shown to have some reliability in discriminating between paedophile and non-paedophile sexual offenders, but it is far from completely dependable (Seto, 2004). It is invasive and requires trained clinicians to measure and interpret the results. In addition, there is also a lack of a comparable version for women. Further, its use is complicated by significant overlap in responses between males with paedophilia and those without (Zander, 2009). It is

possible that phallometric responses are better understood not as dichotomous categories, but rather as a continuous measure requiring a cut-off point. But thus far there is no agreement about where such a cut-off point might lie and the variability in testing procedures, stimuli used, and measuring devices makes generalising from available data problematic (Seto, 2004).

There are also a number of more recent approaches to diagnosis, including the measuring of eye movements when viewing erotic stimuli. The theory behind this approach is that sexually-relevant cues like genitals and breasts are involuntarily selected by the participants' eyes before cognition occurs. If the theory is accurate then individuals with paedophilic disorder can be identified by measuring the movement of their eyes while viewing erotic adult, erotic child, and neutral stimuli. There is some evidence to suggest that this approach may have a high rate of specificity and sensitivity, but further research is needed (Fromberger et al., 2012).

Another approach that also attempts to measure subconscious processes is the use of implicit association tests (IAT). In an IAT participants are required to pair two sets of stimuli together. Each set consists of two concepts (e.g. "European" and "African-American") and two attributes (some with positive associations and some with negative). The test consists of two rounds. In the first the participants are required to match culturally concordant pairs of stimuli as quickly as they can. In the second round the participants are asked to match pairs of stimuli that are perceived as being culturally discordant. In cases where the response times between the first and second tests are significantly different cultural bias is believed to have been demonstrated. For example, in the case of investigations of racism one would expect participants to be able to match the European concept to "positive" attributes more quickly than the African-American concept to positive attributes, due to the inherent racism in society. Research conducted by Gavin, Roche, Ruiz, Hogan, and O'Reilly (2012) investigated whether an IAT could potentially be used to demonstrate a cognitive link in a respondent between child-related stimuli and sexual stimuli. The study was exploratory in nature and was only able to provide evidence suggesting that it may be possible to develop a form of IAT that can distinguish between individuals with a sexual interest in children and those who do not.

Stimuli of a sexual nature might also be used to identify paedophiles through the use of brain scans. Ponseti et al. (2012) exposed 24 individuals who had been diagnosed with paedophilia and 32 individuals who had not been so diagnosed to a combination of adult and child erotic stimuli. They then used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to assess

changes in neurological responses. The researchers state that this approach appears to have a very high degree of accuracy. More recent researchers have also used fMRI scans to compare paedophile sexual offenders with non-offending paedophiles (Kärgel et al., 2016). However, these techniques are also not without limitations.

Firstly, they require significant financial resources, which may make them difficult to use widely. Secondly, as has been discussed above, correctly identifying individuals with paedophilia does not tell one whether they are a sexual abuser. This is especially concerning, given that the diagnosis brings with it significant personal, social, and legal danger (Carlstedt, Innala, Brimse & Soderstrom, 2005; DiChristina, 2009). Moreover, Moser (2009) has observed that the stigma associated with the diagnosis may create the danger of a “thought crime”, where individuals may be labelled and punished based on the results of a brain scan, rather than any acts of sexual abuse. Although this may seem an unlikely outcome, the point is nonetheless concerning, given the literature’s increasingly sociolegal understanding of the paraphilia, discussed above (Feelgood and Hoyer, 2008) – and that sort of possibility necessitates an examination of the various legal approaches to paedophilia.

## **2.8 Legal Approaches**

The relationship between paedophilic disorder and legal systems is oriented, as one might expect, around the breaking of laws (Ashenden, 2002). This includes both the committing of sexual acts as well as the creation, dissemination, or possession of IIOC. A diagnosis of paedophilia has important ramifications for a convicted sexual offender and thus the legal and psychological professions have a close relationship on the issue of sexual offences against children. This close relationship between the two professions poses potential problems. In particular it may challenge those who wish to establish standard criteria for identifying paedophile sexual offenders, because it is another way that the scientific research on paedophilia might be influenced by non-scientific sources.

The legal term "sex offender" can refer to a wide variety of individuals from those who sexually assault adults, to those who commit statutory rape, to those who reveal their genitals in public. Individuals in this category may or may not be paedophiles (Hayes & Carpenter, 2013). Similarly, the term "child molester" can refer both to paedophiles and non-paedophile child sex offenders (Newburn, 2011). Statutory rape is broadly defined as consensual sexual

activity between an adult and someone who is below the legal age of consent but older than the 13 years of age commonly needed for a charge of child sexual abuse. However, this is not a universally agreed principle. In Anglophone countries there is a tendency towards the criminalisation of sexual contact between adults and those younger than 16 to 18 years, while many other countries have historically had lower ages of consent; in cases as low as 14 or 15 (Hofmeister, 2004). Moreover, the issue of statutory rape has provoked significant debate amongst psychological researchers. Some researchers, notably Ray Blanchard and colleagues (Blanchard et al., 2009) argue that an additional diagnostic category of “hebephilia” should be created to designate individuals with a sexual preference for those who are around the age of puberty, as opposed to below it. This new category would be distinct from paedophilia but would cover many of the individuals who are found guilty of statutory rape. This could prove important because a diagnosis is often required to facilitate treatment for sexual offenders, should it be needed (O’Donohue, 2010). Blanchard et al. argue that ample evidence exists to support the idea that hebephilia constitutes a genuine age preference, and one that is distinguishable from paedophilia. However, other researchers (DeClue 2009; Franklin, 2009) have criticised the arguments for the creation of this new category, on a number of grounds.

DeClue argues that if one is going to pathologise hebephilia (attraction to 11-14 year olds) then why should one not pathologise ephebephilia (attraction to 15-18 year olds), teleiophilia (attraction to mature adults) and gerontophilia (attraction to the elderly)? DeClue’s point is that simply proving that hebephilia exists is not the same as proving that it constitutes a psychopathology. Blanchard has responded that the rationale for pathologising hebephilia is the same as for paedophilic disorder: it involves a sexual attraction to physically immature individuals (Blanchard et al., 2009). This was a key feature of the DSM-IV-TR explanation of paedophilia. Green (2010) criticises this approach by asking whether an individual’s diagnosis of hebephilia would be overturned if it could be shown that the teenager with whom they had sexual contact was “physically mature”. The arguments of Blanchard and his colleagues for the inclusion of hebephilia in the DSM-5 were ultimately rejected.

Franklin (2009) argues that the attempts to create the new diagnosis of hebephilia are largely driven, not by scientific argument, but by the need of the legal profession and society at large to pathologise sexual offenders. These diagnoses have been shown to influence the sentencing and post-sentencing treatment of sexual offenders, and to be regarded as a sign that a sex offender is more likely to reoffend (Fromberger et al., 2012). Levenson and Morin (2006) showed that for this reason a diagnosis of paedophilia was one of the most significant factors



determining whether a convicted sexual offender would be placed in mandatory “civil commitment” facility after leaving prison.

During a civil commitment a sexual offender who has completed their jail term is placed in a rehabilitation facility and prevented from leaving until staff at the facility judge that they are no longer a “threat to society”. Civil commitments have been criticised because they can place a sexual offender into a situation where they are never permitted to leave. This may occur because the sexual offender is not allowed to leave unless they complete a treatment program, but the treatment program involves full disclosure of fantasies, urges, and crimes both past and present. These disclosures are not confidential and are often used during later hearings to justify further confinement. This approach effectively punishes sexual offenders for seeking rehabilitation and can result in a potentially indefinite detention (Miller, 2010).

These difficulties become more pronounced when combined with Internet-based “stings” in which police officers pose as children who are seeking sexual contact with adults. These stings are used to lure suspected paedophiles into meeting the supposed child in person. At the meeting they are arrested by police and prosecuted for “attempted sexual contact with a minor”. Fulda (2005) criticises this approach. He argues that only a relatively small percentage of those who are caught in such police actions have any prior conviction for a sexual offense and that a similarly small percentage of actual child sexual abusers who are arrested through other means found their victims using the Internet. Fulda argues that this implies that the sexual offenders who are caught are not likely to have ever acted on their urges if the sting had not taken place, and that sexual offenders who do act on their urges (and need to be caught as a matter of urgency) are unlikely to be apprehended using this approach. Indeed, there is mounting evidence that online offenders may be significantly different to contact offenders (Meridian, Curtis, Thakker, Wilson & Boer, 2014; VanZuylen, 2015; Kärgel et al., 2016). Furthermore, once an individual has been prosecuted following such a sting they may be diagnosed with paedophilic disorder and face indefinite detention in a civil commitment facility, without ever having committed any of the “harm” that all legal and most psychological definitions of paedophilic disorder rest on.

It thus seems clear that the legal approach to paedophilia and the interaction between legal and psychopathological understandings of paedophilia have significant practical consequences. Moreover, it is clear that the legal approach to the topic does little to advance a clearer understanding of the paedophilia. In fact, the interaction of the two paradigms seems to



further confuse matters. This confusion may be influencing both the research literature on paedophilia and the legal processes relating to the prosecution of sexual offences (Harrison et al., 2010). In addition to the legal and psychopathological attempts to understand the phenomenon, there is also a significant body of work that follows a biological approach to it.

## **2.9 The Biological Perspective.**

Many attempts to use medical techniques to examine paedophilia. This research has led some to investigate possible neurological bases for paedophilia. The approach has been bolstered by the discovery of cases in which brain injury or illness seems to have caused paedophilia to develop in individuals who did not previously have it (Mendez & Shapira, 2011). It has also been argued that if paedophilia has a biological basis then it may be inheritable and thus have an identifiable genetic cause. Some studies have shown that paedophiles are more likely than controls to be left-handed, but that this trend does not correlate with adults who committed incest with children and do not appear to be paedophiles (Cantor, Blanchard, Robichaud & Christensen, 2005).

Similarly, it has been generally accepted for some time that paedophiles tend to have a lower average IQ than non-paedophiles (Seto, 2004). In particular Cantor et al. (2006) demonstrated in a study that compared paedophile, hebephile, and teleiophile sexual offenders with teleiophile non-offenders that both the paedophile group and the hebephile group were twice as likely to have failed a grade during their schooling. It has been argued that these differences suggest that paedophilia may be caused by some factor that affects the brain (Mendez & Shapira, 2011). However, many of the studies that demonstrated this apparent intellectual weakness may have been affected by mixing samples of paedophiles with non-paedophiles, or were limited in that they only used forensic samples i.e. convicted sexual offenders rather than paedophiles who had not been convicted of a crime (Ray, Kimonis & Donoghue, 2010). Thus, there may be a difference in intellectual ability between paedophiles who have been convicted of a crime and those who have not (Habermeyer et al., 2010).

Furthermore, recent neurological research by Poepl et al. (2013) found that while there do seem to be structural differences between paedophile sexual offenders and non-paedophile non-sexual criminal offenders, differences were also observed within the paedophilic offender group. The researchers suggest that this implies that there are subtypes of paedophilia. If this

is the case, then attempts to find a single biological cause that explains the paraphilia may prove fruitless. Indeed, other researchers argue that while there is some evidence for heritability in paedophilia this link is no stronger than the link between prior abuse and paedophilia, and is relatively weak overall (Alanko, Salo, Mokros & Santtila, 2013). Many constructionist theorists agree, contending that all arguments for the heritability or pure biological basis of an aspect of human sexuality can never be entirely accurate. This, they argue, is because these are “essentialist” views that describe sexuality as an innate characteristic that operates free from culture, history, or the influence of society (Foucault, 1976), which is in conceptually flawed (Weeks, 1989). As is typically the case, the biological perspective has an associated environmental one – which looks at the extent to which, and manner in which, environmental factors can play a role in the development of paedophilia.

## **2.10 The Environmental Perspective.**

The most commonly cited potential environmental factor that may contribute to the development of paedophilia is a history of childhood sexual abuse. Research on this matter is contradictory with estimates of abuse histories amongst paedophiles varying between 35 and 60% (Hughes, 2007). However, there is general consensus on two issues. Firstly, it is accepted that the number of paedophiles who were sexually abused as children is significantly higher than that of the general population. And secondly, in spite of this correlation most children who are sexually abused do not become abusers themselves (Greenall & Jellicoe-Jones, 2007; Ikomi, Gibson & Samuels, 2009). Another possible environmental factor has been identified by Gerardin & Thibaut (2004). The authors call attention to a high incidence of alcohol and drug abuse amongst child sexual offenders and argue that these substances may play a role in reducing inhibition amongst some paedophiles. Aside from child sexual abuse, other events in childhood may contribute to paedophilia by conditioning a child to favour a particular sexual response. Santtila et al. (2010) argue that sexual experimentation amongst children of similar ages may condition those children who are predisposed to developing paedophilia into regarding children as viable sexual partners. Marshall and Marshall (2000) offer a different interpretation of the conditioning hypothesis by arguing that the sexual histories of paedophiles are similar to those of non-paedophiles, but that paedophiles masturbate to sexual fantasies involving children, and masturbate more often overall. They contend that paedophiles

condition themselves in this way to regard their child-fixated fantasies as more rewarding than sexual activity with adults.

Similarly, Bray (2011) argues that it is exposure to IIOC itself that awakens sexual desire for children in paedophiles, because it exposes them to a sexualisation of children that they find appealing, and that they would not have encountered elsewhere. Other researchers have agreed, arguing that access to IIOC spurs an interest in sexual contact between adults and children that culminates in actual sexual abuse, and that they can serve a comparable function to cognitive distortions, by normalising sexual contact between children and adults (Wilson & Jones, 2008). However, other studies suggest that some paedophiles may use IIOC as a substitute for real-world sexual contact and that access to IIOC may reduce the risk that they pose to children (Winder & Gough, 2010; Meridian et al., 2014). At present there does not seem to be any clarity about which of these perspectives is more accurate. Gleeson (2013) however takes this debate a step further arguing that Western media is saturated with sexualised images of children and that we have a culture that almost fetishizes youth. She argues that in this environment it is inevitable that some individuals will find their sexuality becoming fixated on children. It thus seems clear that there is disagreement about how to define paedophilia and much of the research has findings that are contradictory. Compounding this problem is the fact that although child molesters represent a highly disparate group (Howitt, 1995; Marshall, 1997; Seto, 2004; Goode, 2009; Durkin and Bryant, 1999; O'Halloran and Quayle, 2010), research into paedophilia often treats the phenomenon rather homogenously (Grubin, 1998; Hollin & Howells, 1991; Marshall, 1997; Prentky, 1999).

Considering all these various factors (legal, psychopathological, biological, environmental, and so on), and the disparate nature of how paedophilia manifests, it is perhaps unsurprising that taxonomic attempts at classification have been made so as to describe and understand its many facets. This will be discussed, and proves important to the work at hand.

## **2.11 Taxonomies**

One way in which these difficulties could be addressed is by investigating whether there might be sub-categories of paedophile who behave in different ways. This might go some way towards describing a heterogenous group more accurately and consistently. Indeed, Knight and Prentky state that:

“In the scientific study of anomalous behaviour, the indispensable role of classification is well established. Understanding the taxonomic structure of a deviant population is the keystone of theory building and the cornerstone of intervention. It provides a pivotal underpinning for research on a population and is an essential prerequisite for determining the optimum response of society to deviance” (1990, p. 23).

The authors also point out that studies’ ability to explain the phenomenon is negatively impacted where child offenders are considered a homogenous group (Knight & Prentky, 1990). Marshall (1997) states that future research should prioritise reducing the heterogeneity of the group, at least to proportions which are manageable.

Looking to influential early work in the field Cohen, Seghorn and Calmas (1969) divided offenders taxonomically into three broad categories: fixated, regressed and aggressive. This refers, respectively, to either a persistent preoccupation and attraction to children (fixated) (Beckett, Beech, Fisher, & Fordham, 1994), or to situational attraction on the basis of personal challenges (regressed) as well as to individuals who specifically cause physical harm (aggressive). These categories have proved influential in subsequent research, which has often attempted to further discriminate with greater accuracy based on additional factors. For example, there is said to be a difference between “exclusive” paedophiles who are not at all sexually interested in adults and those who are attracted to adults but simply prefer children. This is reflected in the specifiers on the most recent DSM diagnostic criteria which separate exclusive paedophiles from non-exclusive ones (APA, 2013).

Similarly, there is said to be a difference between those paedophiles who are strictly heterosexual and those who are not (Winder & Gough, 2010). Neutze et al. (2012) argue that differences also exist between contact offenders and those paedophiles who only express their paraphilia online by collecting IIOC or engaging in sexually-themed conversations. These include differences in age, educational level, and employment. Meridian, Curtis, Thakker, Wilson, and Boer (2013) have created a typology that draws distinctions between IIOC offenders who are likely to commit acts of sexual abuse and those who seem content to satisfy themselves with IIOC alone. Likewise, when analysing data on the likelihood of sexual offenders reoffending Hanson and Bussiere (1998) found that most sexual offenders had a low chance of recidivism but that there were sub-groups with a much higher chance. The characteristics of these sub-groups were difficult to define but sexual deviancy and a history of

violence were found to be significant. More recent research seems to confirm these findings (Bailey, Bernhard, & Hsu, 2016).

A further study, conducted by Tewksbury, Jennings, and Zgoba (2012) argued that sexual offenders can be placed into two distinct groups: one that is likely to reoffend and one that is not. Furthermore, they argue that the most important factor separating the two groups is a tendency to use violence, that these violent offenders have the highest chance of reoffending, and that violent offenders also tend to commit a wider variety of crimes. While studying individuals in a facility for juvenile sexual offenders Ikomi, Gibson, and Samuels (2009) found that even amongst this relatively narrow sample differences existed, and that some of the categories that emerged related to the levels of hostility and aggression of participants.

There also seems to be a difference in how paedophiles perceive their interactions with children. Finkelhor and Araj noted in 1986 that the paedophiles they were studying seemed to desire a genuine relationship and emotional connection with children rather than only sex. On the other hand, DiChristina (2009) and others have noted that much child sexual abuse is brutal and exploitative, devoid of any attempts at forming “relationships”. DiChristina argues that these contradictory findings point towards their being two groups of paedophiles. Malon (2011) agrees stating that the literature on paedophilia at times seems to be describing two completely different groups of people. One of these groups is described as being “monstrous”, while the other is described as being concerned with avoiding harm, despite the fact that harm is nonetheless inflicted. Hunter (2008) similarly argues that physical violence is only present in roughly 20% of child sexual abuse cases. The author states that though the most extreme cases of abuse are those most frequently reported on in the media, they are thankfully rare. Further, he argues that it is these violent offenders who are the ones who are most likely to reoffend and that they display a tendency to commit other crimes as well. They are also on average more likely to demonstrate psychopathic traits.

The cognitive distortions of paedophiles may also indicate differences. Many paedophiles are subject to cognitive distortions that allow them to construct the sexual abuse of children as being something that is not only non-harmful but possibly even “beneficial” to the child. Interestingly, some research suggests that contact offenders are less likely than non-contact offenders to believe that children have sexual agency and can choose to engage in sexual activity with an adult. In other words, contact offenders are more likely to understand that their sexual advances are unwanted but continue with their advances despite this

knowledge (Howitt & Sheldon, 2007). This is in contrast to the paedophiles described by Finkelhor and Araji (1986), Durkin and Bryant (1998) or Naude (2005) who seemed to believe that sexual acts between adults and children are not harmful or can even be desired by the child.

Notably, Knight and Prentky (1990) researched Rapists and Child Molesters with a view to establishing whether useful distinctions could be made between them. Their research, in line with the 1969 work of Cohen et al., found that dividing paedophiles into “fixated” and “regressed” categories was useful. Furthermore, they point to the salience of offense style, and physical injury groups (the latter notably in terms of whether the abuse appears sadistic or non-sadistic) as a means of discriminating between different offenders. Prentky (1999) points out that implicit in the division, into fixated or regressed types, is the idea of social competence. Whilst studies show that CSA offenders tend to have lower than average IQ, this may be because the samples used to assess this are typically incarcerated and may therefore be unrepresentative. Prentky argues that abusers, ironically, usually require degrees of social skill to be able to commit the abuse, which typically requires friendship, degrees of trust, coercive skill etc. Therefore, it is more productive to think of the “Fixated” and “Regressed” categories more as existing upon a continuum, rather than as two discreet or binary categories (Prentky, 1999). Knight and Prentky’s work, most especially from 1990, has received widespread acclaim in the field, with Bickley and Beech (2001) stating that “the Massachusetts Treatment Center Child Molester Typology, Version...is often regarded as the most comprehensive typology of child molesters to date...” (p. 62). Numerous other attempts at categorizing offenders have been made.

Bickley and Beech (2000), in reviewing many of the attempts to categorise offenders point out that child molesters are typically divided based on 4 processes: clinical descriptions, demographic clusters, psychometric profiles, and finally theory-driven groups (meaning that distinctions are made on the basis of attributes that are of central concern to a particular theory). Literature frequently divides offenders into preferential and situational offenders (Bickley & Beech, 2002), a salient dividing point that has its origins early in the history of academic research into paedophilia.

For instance, Schlank (1995) identifies 7 subtypes of sex offender. Of these various attempts, possibly the most influential comes from Ward and Hudson, in the form of their ‘Self Regulatory Model’ (1998). The ‘Self Regulatory Model of the offense process’ by Ward and Hudson (1998) represents a significant step forward in the research, not only theoretically but

practically, vis a vis treatment, behavioural regulation etc. (Bickley and Beech 2002, Looman 2001). This research used a grounded theory approach, in which researchers listened to the personal accounts of offenders themselves. It revealed clear distinctions between offenders, and on the basis of these distinctions divided offenders into four - Approach / Avoidance, and Active / Passive. In so doing, cognitive, affective and offense variables were all taken into account.

Ward and Hudson (1998) developed a model that refers to the manner in which offenders regulate and direct their actions. This self-regulation model was created using a grounded theory approach using imprisoned child molesters' offence accounts. The authors suggest that it is possible to isolate a variety of different patterns evident in the behavior of sexual offenders. This then allows for the classification of offenders based on one of four different paths to offending. These groups are defined by the individual offender's goal relating to "deviant" sex, i.e. approach or avoidance and by their choice of tactics aimed at achieving that goal, i.e. active or passive. In their own research (2002) which replicated Ward and Hudson's model, Bickley and Beech suggested that Ward and Hudson's model could reliably be employed in the classification of child sex offenders, adding further credence to the model. Ward and Hudson further argue that understanding these divisions demands different treatment modalities (1998, 1999). As Bickley and Beech (2002) point out:

"Given the considerable financial constraints faced by many treatment facilities, a major aim of an effective classification system should be to inform the adequate targeting of interventions to make the best use of these limited funds. The ability to tailor treatment to the specific needs of distinct groups of offenders would certainly ensure the most effective use of clinical resources." (p. 65)

Two potential criticisms of Ward and Hudson's work, and work that has been based on it, applies to most research into paedophilia: sample size, clinician bias and the high likelihood that sexual "deviants" will be dishonest. As Ward and Hudson's research was based on only 26 untreated offenders, it is questionable how representative this is of the general offender population. This problem is common in such research, with n sizes often being even smaller. Likewise, the nature of clinical interviews makes it somewhat more likely that researchers might sway, unwittingly, participants into giving certain answers in line with the researcher's expectation. The clinical settings in which interviews and investigations typically take place usually mean that there are especially pronounced power disparities between researcher and



participant, and often the ideological stance of clinicians, given the nature of the phenomena, mean that their capacity to observe neutrally and non-judgmentally may be more stretched than in most research contexts. Compounding this, “Faking Good” is especially problematic when paedophilia is the phenomenon under scrutiny. This refers to the pressure to represent oneself as more socially acceptable or “better” than one may be in fact be. Citing Saunders, 1991, Bickley and Beech (2002) describe faking good in saying that: “A social desirability response bias occurs when individuals give answers that are socially approved, in order to make a good impression” (p. 378). Potential legal implications and the intense social stigma attached to participants being entirely frank make “faking good” in research into paedophilia, an especially problematic factor.

Participants in such research face very realistic dangers should they be entirely open about their offenses, including the possibility of incarceration, lengthening of existent prison sentences, their addition to sex offender registries, social shunning and exclusion etc. Comparatively few paedophiles are willing to openly testify to their offences, and it is reasonable to assume that even these testimonies are more likely to be misrepresentations (or ‘faked-good’) than typical testimonies would be – particularly given clinician bias as briefly discussed above. Consequently, paedophiles are an especially difficult population to study in great depth. They have an unusually strong incentive to lie or “fake good”, are difficult to study in serious numbers, and even when such research occurs, clinician bias plausibly an especially strong role in the initial receipt and subsequent interpretation of data.

Despite these limitations, there exists a significant body of scholarship devoted to exploring the attitudes and experiences of paedophiles.

## **2.12 Paedophile Attitudes and Experiences.**

### **2.12.1 Introduction.**

Winder and Gough (2010) conducted research aimed at determining whether individuals convicted of downloading IIOC were willing to take responsibility for their actions and admit that their behaviour may have contributed to the harming of children. The researchers interviewed seven incarcerated sex offenders who had been found guilty of downloading IIOC. The interviews were semi-structured and were analysed using interpretive phenomenological



analysis. Five main themes were identified. These were “obsession and compulsion”, “isolation”, “escapism”, “enjoyment” and “self-distancing”. The researchers determined that the theme of “self-distancing” was of greatest importance and have explored it at length.

Their analysis suggests that their participants downplayed the seriousness of their activities and attempted to excuse or minimise their own responsibility. Specifically, the participants devoted significant time to arguing that their activities were justified because they had not led to any “real” harm. They attempted to minimize the possibility of causing harm by arguing that many of the children who are exploited to make IIOC are not aware that the images would later be used as IIOC, and that they appeared in the photographs to be enjoying themselves. They compared their own crimes to other, far more serious crimes, as a means of implying that their behaviour was not sufficiently damaging to justify their incarceration. Lastly, they argued against the illegality of their actions by mentioning examples of countries in which some forms of IIOC were not illegal or where the age of sexual consent was lower. Winder and Gough (2010) concluded by arguing that the insights gained into how some paedophiles distance themselves from their crimes can be used to provide more effective therapy for convicted sex offenders.

The attitudes described above are said to be typical of child sexual offenders and are often placed under the broad heading of “cognitive distortions” (Howitt & Sheldon, 2007). These appear to play a significant role in how paedophiles attempt to rationalise their behaviour, and understanding this is crucial to apprehending the thought processes involved in many offenders.

### **2.12.2 Cognitive distortions.**

Cognitive distortions refer to any inaccurate beliefs that are held by a paedophile to excuse or justify their behaviour. It is believed that cognitive distortions are important because they serve a protective function, shielding paedophiles from the shame or guilt that might accompany their behaviour. Being abusive towards a child, particularly given their social, psychological and physical vulnerability, is a serious transgression of most societal moral codes and consequently is likely to produce (often extreme) guilt and shame. Even un-acted-upon attraction to children, by an adult, is a serious social taboo, and consequently people who have such impulses typically live with strong feelings of self-reproach. If these sexual impulses are irrepressible, it is quite conceivable that cognitive distortions are almost required by the

individual in order to cope. Being able to persuade oneself that the behaviour is somehow not reprehensible is consequently almost necessary if the individual is to avoid feelings of shame.

Given this, it is furthermore argued that this may mean that cognitive distortions play a role in turning a non-contact paedophile into someone who acts on their urges. This is said to happen because cognitive distortions help convince paedophiles that sexual contact between adults and children is unproblematic, making it more likely that the individual will act upon rather than merely entertain the impulse (Paquette, Cortoni, Proulx & Longpre, 2014).

A further complicating factor emerges on account of cognitive distortions. Since paedophiles in some instances persuade themselves that their behaviour, thoughts and feelings are not overly bad, it is that much less likely that they will regard treatment as a priority or even necessary. Consequently, attitudes toward treatment will now be discussed.

### **2.12.3 Attitudes towards treatment.**

Therapy for sexual offenders takes many forms and these will be explored in a section later in this chapter. However, some studies have looked at the attitude of paedophiles towards treatment for their paraphilia and some key findings will be discussed here. Beier et al. (2009) created a research and treatment project that attempted to contact men who felt that they were at risk of sexually abusing a child but had not yet been convicted of a crime. Over two hundred men responded to public advertisements and entered a voluntary treatment program. What was found was that many of these men had been grappling unsuccessfully with their urges for decades without any appropriate support or treatment being made available. A key finding of Beier et al.'s work is that their research was only possible because disclosure laws in Germany (where the study took place) prevented the researchers from revealing to the authorities any illegal conduct reported in a therapeutic context. The knowledge that this was the case reassured the participants that their participation in therapy could not lead to arrest, prosecution and incarceration.

However, this also led to a limitation of the project: selection bias. Since every respondent wished to enter treatment for their paedophilia it stands to reason that each of them felt that their behaviour was wrong. This may not be the case with the majority of paedophiles, so further research that finds the means to overcome this limitation is needed. Secondly, since the treatment was only available to those paedophiles who had not been charged with a crime

it is possible that participants may have attempted to hide previous run-ins with the police. Furthermore, they may have wished to downplay or conceal acts of child sexual abuse on their part in order to avoid potential condemnation or stigma on the part of the researchers. Thus, even in this study, the participants had some incentive to be dishonest.

Drapeau, Korner, Brunet, and Granger (2004) also investigated paedophiles' attitudes towards a voluntary treatment program. They conducted semi-structured interviews that were oriented around the participants' perceptions of the voluntary nature of the treatment, their motivation for attending the treatment sessions, and their perceptions of the ways in which the treatment was helpful, or unhelpful. What they found was that many of the participants felt that the "voluntary" treatment was actually compulsory. These participants felt that they were under social pressure to submit to treatment and that their own desires were inconsequential. Other participants felt that the treatments were voluntary, but that they should be made compulsory because of the importance they attached to "getting better". A final group of participants felt that making therapy compulsory would remove any opportunity they had to "own" their own therapeutic process and would thus be counter-productive.

Another key finding was that all of the participants felt that an important benefit of the treatment program was that it gave them an opportunity to express themselves. This was something that they felt they could not find anywhere else. They also felt that the treatment program provided information that they would not have been able to find elsewhere and helped them understand themselves and their victims better. This study is a valuable exploration of these issues but it also suffers from a limitation mentioned above: all of the participants were convicted sexual offenders, who may not be representative of paedophiles as a whole, particularly given research that suggests that differences may indeed exist between child sexual offenders who have been arrested and those who have not (Ray, Kimonis & Donoghue, 2010; Neutze, Grundmann, Scherner & Beier, 2012).

A further study was conducted by Naude (2005) who interviewed three incarcerated paedophiles who had been convicted of sexual offences against children. Naude used semi-structured, qualitative interview techniques and analysed how these three men constructed their relationships with young children. The topic was approached from a social constructionist point of view and the discourses examined were seen through a framework of "close relationships". What Naude found was that the paedophiles she spoke to conceptualised their interactions with children in terms of their need for emotional fulfilment, a fulfilment that could only be achieved

through a close relationship with a child. She also stated that the paedophiles' conceptions of their relationships with children formed "unstoried knowledge" that the paedophiles created because conventional society does not have any "legitimate narrative by which they could express their experiences" (Naude, 2005, p. 107). What this study and the Drapeau et al. study have in common is the finding that the paedophiles who took part felt that they had no place to express themselves without being subject to condemnation. Naude specifically speaks of how her participants described their interactions with children as forming a narrative that is in opposition to the one that predominates in society.

This need among paedophiles to express themselves was also explored by Durkin and Bryant (1999) who performed the first analysis of a website for paedophiles; a so-called "boy lover support forum". The website was a platform for individuals with a sexual attraction to young boys to interact with one another. The focus of the study was to explore how these so-called "deviants" accounted for their behaviour. The authors divided such accounts into two categories: excuses (in which the harm of the action is acknowledged but responsibility is diminished) and justifications (in which responsibility is acknowledged but the possibility of harm is denied). The researchers found that more than half of the 41 self-identified paedophiles in the study sought to explain their behaviour but interestingly none of them used excuses, all used justifications and for the most part denied the possibility that their behaviour was harmful in any way. The most commonly used justification was "denial of injury" in which the respondent argued that there is no harm in sexual contact between adults and children, the creation of IIOC, and so on.

A second theme of importance was named "condemning the condemners". It occurred when those who opposed adult-child sexual contact were characterised as irrational, abusive, ahistorical, or self-interested. Then there were accounts that consisted of "basking in the reflected glory of others" in which the achievements of famous individuals believed to be paedophiles such as Plato, Oscar Wilde, Alan Ginsberg, and so on were discussed. Lastly, there were "claims of benefit" in which the participants argued that sexual contact between adults and children offer benefits such as sexual education or the development of self-knowledge.

More recently O'Halloran and Quayle (2010) revisited Durkin and Bryant's research by returning to the same "boy love" support forum. They analysed one month's worth of posts from 23 self-identified paedophiles. They applied the same codes and categories as Durkin and Bryant and found that they were still in use. However, they noted that some of their participants

did acknowledge that sexual contact between adults and children might be harmful in certain circumstances, and that in the cases where harm was acknowledged, excuses (such as “men cannot control their biological needs”) were used. Another finding of the study was that some participants drew a distinction between those “boy lovers” who sought “consent” from children and those who committed acts of rape.

O’Halloran and Quayle also investigated why this type of forum, which was somewhat technologically out of date, was still being used. They determined that the attitude of society at large towards paedophiles made it difficult for paedophiles to express themselves in a genuine way or to maintain a positive self-image. Places like the “boy lover support forum” offer an opportunity for paedophiles to reframe their experience, for example by swapping the terms “child abuser” or “molester” for the more positive “boy lover”.

A somewhat similar study was performed by Goode (2009). The author gained access to an online paedophile support website on Freenet, a part of the darknet as defined in Appendix A. From there she contacted users who were self-identified paedophiles and asked them to take part in a series of interviews. Her study had 54 primary participants who each completed a questionnaire created by Goode. The questionnaire was piloted by sending it to eight participants and then analysing the responses in collaboration with academics and members of the paedophile community. In addition to the primary responses, 18 of the participants agreed to further communication. Most of these communicated with Goode via email but two of them agreed to take part in face-to-face interviews. Almost all of the participants were between the ages of twenty and thirty-nine, and all but two were male. Goode found that most of her participants had been sexually active from a young age, engaging in masturbation before the age of ten and sexual “play” with other children before the age of 16. Most reported that they had been attracted to minors for most of their lives. Roughly ten percent of the participants were parents. Ten of the participants had been charged with a CSA related crime, six of these had been convicted, and two of those who were convicted received jail time as a punishment.

When asked how they felt about sexual contact with another adult the participants were equally split between feeling positive, negative, or neutral about the idea. An interesting discovery was that while some of the participants fell neatly into the homosexual or heterosexual identity, there were also some who were heterosexually attracted to adults but homosexually or bisexually attracted to minors. Many of the participants felt that mainstream society did not contain any place for them and gave them no means to construct a meaningful

identity for themselves. They felt that they were almost forced to seek out other paedophiles (typically via the Internet) in order to find a way to negotiate an identity.

Furthermore, many of the participants stated that they had been unable to find any assistance in managing their paraphilia or dealing with the emotional consequences of being a paedophile, other than from that offered by other paedophiles. The participants stated that the paedophile community was sharply divided between those who felt that adult-child sex is not harmful, and those who believe that it is. Likewise, they are split between those who feel that viewing IIOC is bad and those who feel that it is either non-harmful or serves as a vital outlet for their sexual urges. These individuals claim that masturbating while viewing IIOC assists them in keeping their attraction to children strictly within the realm of fantasy and prevents them from engaging in sexual contact with children in the “real world”. This finding has since been replicated by other researchers (Meridian et al., 2014).

Goode’s conclusions were that we need to adopt a more support-based approach to dealing with paedophilia. She further concluded that the negative media attention paid to paedophiles is counter-productive because it reinforces an inaccurate understanding of paedophilia among the public. Furthermore, the author argued that it makes it very difficult for paedophiles to find emotional support outside of the paedophile community itself. Given how large and comprehensive Goode’s study is it can reasonably be asked why a further investigation, of a similar nature, is needed.

The answer lies in a possible limitation of Goode’s study: the issue of illegality and confidentiality. As Beier et al. (2009) noted above, paedophiles are only likely to disclose their true activities if they are secure in the knowledge that they cannot be prosecuted for them. In contrast Goode was very upfront about the ethical constraints under which she was operating. She informed all of her participants that if they were to tell her of illegal activity on their part that she would be required to pass that information on to the police. In one instance she did inform the police of an admission a respondent had made about sexually assaulting a young boy.

Similarly, the fact that Goode’s participants contacted her from unsecured email accounts, or even face-to-face, meant that security and the fear of exposure were likely to have been paramount in their minds. These two factors gave her participants ample motivation to lie about some aspects of their responses, particularly as regards their possible use of IIOC, or their sexual contact with minors. Goode acknowledged these limitations but had no means to

overcome it. Thus, further research that finds ways to bypass these limitations is needed. But within the research on paedophilia it seems accepted that paedophiles feel the need to find social support and express themselves through any means available, particularly online communities.

Having now discussed attitudes toward treatment, it would seem apposite to discuss the commoner kinds of treatment used in the field.

## **2.13 Treatment**

The most common treatments for paraphilic disorders like paedophilic disorder can be divided into two broad categories: medical interventions and therapeutic interventions. This section will briefly explore the research around these various approaches.

### **2.13.1 Medical interventions.**

One particularly controversial approach to the treatment of paedophilic disorder is castration. This approach began with surgical procedures in which a patient's hypothalamus was partially, or wholly, removed in order to reduce their sex drive. However, this seemed ineffective and surgical responses shifted to the amputation of the testes: surgical castration. This approach was regarded as an effective treatment for certain serious sexual disorders. But it became unpopular when it was discovered that almost a third of patients "treated" in this way were still able to engage in sexual intercourse (Hughes, 2007), and that even after having undergone such a disfiguring surgery the recidivism rate was still roughly 5% (Beech & Harkins, 2012).

From there, chemical anti-libidinal medications became more widely used. While there are several different medications that are used for this purpose, they all function in a similar way. They reduce the effects of sex hormones on the body in an attempt to decrease sexual thoughts and desires or render the individual unable to engage in sexual acts. This combination has led to the process being referred to as 'chemical castration' (Habermeier et al., 2012). Despite chemical castration being widely utilized in the treatment of sexual offenders there are difficulties involved in their use. Some of the medications have to be taken for years before they become fully effective. This time delay becomes even more problematic because many



patients refuse to take the medication or take it inconsistently. The unpopularity of the treatment may be related to the serious negative side-effects that the medication can cause. These include, but are not limited to, brittle bones, depression, lactation, weight gain, heart failure, and potentially fatal damage to the liver.

These side-effects are one of the reasons why chemical castration is so controversial, but they have not prevented some researchers (Gerardin & Thibaut, 2004) from suggesting the use of chemical castration on juvenile sexual offenders, despite evidence that suggests that many juvenile sexual offenders do not continue offending into adulthood (Seto, 2004). Practical and ethical limitations have also led to a dearth in research on anti-androgen medications that involve a complete double-blind and placebo-controlled research design (Jordan, Fromberger, Stolpmann & Muller, 2011).

A different approach to chemical treatments has been the use of SSRI antidepressants. The effectiveness of these treatments is believed to be twofold. Firstly, by reducing the impact of co-morbid depressive or obsessive symptoms these medications allow the patient to more effectively control their own behaviour. Secondly, common side-effects of SSRIs include reduction in libido and sexual performance. It is believed that these symptoms may add to these medications' efficacy in treating paedophilia (Gerardin & Thibaut, 2004). However, the research on the value of SSRIs for this purpose is limited. Most of the research supporting their use consists of single case studies or studies with small sample sizes, and thus empirical support for the use of SSRIs in the treatment of paedophilia is incomplete (Beech & Harkins, 2012). Therefore, it appears that the use of surgical or chemical treatments for paedophilic disorder may be insufficient in isolation. Therefore, therapy is employed in various forms to aid in the treatment of individuals reporting paedophilic urges.

### **2.13.2 Therapeutic interventions.**

There are number of different therapeutic treatments for paedophilic disorder that are currently being used. Under the broad heading of "behavioural therapy" lie a cluster of approaches that all attempt to manage, remove, or change the paedophiles' sexual interest in children. The first approach is aversion therapy whereby the paedophile is exposed an erotic stimulus and is also exposed to a negative stimulus. The purpose is to condition the paedophile in such a way that they cannot help but associate the erotic stimulus with the negative stimulus.



The first form of aversion therapy that was attempted used electricity to provide a painful shock to the paedophile. However, this approach fell out of favour due to ethical concerns. It was soon followed by olfactory aversion therapy where the erotic stimulus is paired with an unpleasant smell like rotting meat. Similarly, there is ammonia aversion therapy where the inhalation of ammonia salts causes both an unpleasant smell and a painful sensation. A different approach to the aversion model is covert sensitization. In this method the patient is taught to associate erotic stimuli with thoughts of physical illness, for example imagining the discovery that a child with whom they have had sexual contact is actually diseased. In this way it is hoped that an aversion response will be created by linking erotic stimuli with thoughts that are repugnant. Many of these aversion techniques are still used as part of a treatment regimen for paraphilic disorders, even though evidence supporting their effectiveness is largely incomplete or unconvincing (Beech & Harkins, 2012).

Another method of therapy is to use masturbation. The first of these approaches attempts to link orgasm with a desired stimulus. For example, an erotic stimulus involving adults rather than children (Khan et al., 2011). Another approach attempts to use masturbation and the verbalisation of sexual fantasies in an effort to satiate the paedophile's sexual desire and thereby assist them in controlling their behaviour. There is very little evidence that either of these approaches is effective (Hughes, 2007). These methods are widely used but it has been argued that they are unlikely to fully succeed because of the extreme difficulty that exists in altering a long-term pattern of sexual attraction (Harvard, 2004).

Approaches that may show more promise involve convincing paedophiles that their view of childhood sexuality is inaccurate. This can be done by debunking the cognitive distortions that many child sexual abusers use to rationalise their actions. This can be done by showing paedophiles video recordings of child sexual abuse survivors recounting how their experiences have affected them and how their experience of sexual contact with an adult differs from that of the paedophile in treatment. Other approaches involve training paedophiles to imagine how their life would change if they engaged in sexual contact with a child and were discovered. In both cases the therapy attempts to convince the paedophile that negative consequences will follow if they act on their urges (Gerardin & Thibaut, 2004; Harvard, 2004).

The issue of the effectiveness of these treatments is controversial but many researchers have found them to be useful in reducing recidivism rates among child sexual offenders (Hughes, 2007; Lindsay, Michie, Steptoe, Moore & Haut, 2010; Beech & Harkins, 2012).

There are however complications. As with all therapies the paedophiles must want to engage with the therapeutic process and must have an interest in changing their behaviour. This can mean that the goals of the therapist and the paedophile are in conflict with one another (Drapeau, Korner, Brunet & Granger, 2004). This problem becomes particularly pronounced in situations where disclosures of prior illegal activity are not confidential, as in the case of the civil commitments discussed above (Miller, 2010). Moser (2009) argues that this compromises the treatment of paedophiles and DiChristina (2009) echoes Goode by maintaining that a lack of access to effective treatment is dangerous for society and makes paedophiles more likely to commit acts of abuse.

The present study goes at least some way to fixing many of these concerns. Being based on discourse in online forums, comparatively large numbers of participants (total  $n =$  ) contributed of their own experiences. These experiences were viewed more impartially than in a typical interview type process, as per the nature of online discourse. Power dynamics between researcher and participant were not unusually skewed, in large part because of the anonymity of subjects. Typically, research consisted in observing what was said, rather than interrogating (although sometimes clarification was sought, this is less of an interference than a typical interview type situation would usually warrant). Likewise, these recounted experiences were presumably less likely to be guilty of the ‘faking good phenomenon’. Participants come to such sites, ostensibly, with the view to airing their experiences and concerns in order to have support by like-minded members of the community. It is, therefore, within their interest to be as open as possible and to disclose to an unusually full extent, in order to receive relevant validation, advice and understanding.

Naturally, there are issues with the current research on these bases too. For instance, though the numbers appear comparatively large, online forums mean that one cannot be sure that a single person did not operate under various handles (rendering the  $n$  number presumptive). Likewise, the researcher of course has personal biases which are impossible to entirely keep from interfering with the data collection and analysis process. Furthermore, participants arguably have an incentive to ‘fake-bad’ – or exaggerate their activities and fantasies in the interests of posturing.

These concerns are legitimate, and not to be disregarded. Despite that, it is reasonable to assume that at least some of the typical concerns associated with paedophile research apply to a lesser extent when conducting online discourse based analysis, particularly from a

grounded theory approach (which further reduces, albeit not completely removing, the likelihood of ideological biases on the part of the researcher leading to a skewing of data collection and analysis).

Specifically, using these darkweb resources and this grounded theory methodology seem apposite as a means of investigating whether typologies of paedophiles exist, and to what extent these (should they exist) disagree or agree with types proposed by previous research.

## **2.14 Conclusion**

Given the damaging effects of CSA on victims and society as a whole, it follows that an understanding of paedophilia is an important goal both in terms of treatment regimens and legal responses to the phenomenon. Although not all CSA is committed by paedophiles, they do account for a portion of offenders. Unfortunately, the very meaning of paedophilia is highly contested. No satisfactory psychiatric, legal or other definition has yet been proposed. One of the reasons for this may be that conceiving of paedophilia as a homogenous phenomenon is ill-conceived. Various attempts have been made at formulating a taxonomy for paedophilia. These studies have gone some way to showing that certain broad categories of paedophile exist. However, these studies suffer from various methodological limitations. More specifically, study participants are likely to be untruthful, considering the legal implications surrounding any admission of CSA and the general societal condemnation of paedophiles. In addition, the maintenance of participant anonymity is difficult when there may be a legal or ethical conflict arises. Further, small sample sizes are problematic, as well as the tendency of clinicians to unintentionally influence the data during interactions with participants. A study of an anonymous paedophile online discussion forum would go some way to bridging this gap. This is because making use of this type of study is likely to provide larger samples; limit interaction between clinicians and participants, thus reducing the chance of biased data; makes it less likely that participant's anonymity will be compromised; and removes some of the incentives that participants would otherwise have to be untruthful.

With this in mind the following research questions were proposed: What can be learned from darknet websites about paedophiles' beliefs, actions, and experiences? Do these beliefs, actions and experiences lend any weight to the notion that different subtypes of paedophile exist? If so, what differentiates these subtypes? What are the implications of these differences?

## **Chapter 3: Method**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter will describe the research process, research paradigm and the method employed. The reasons for choosing these will also be made clear with specific reference to the study's aims and rationales. This chapter will also detail the background of the study and provide a detailed description of the corpus of data used. It will also describe the sample from which the participants were selected. Sections of this chapter will also be devoted to the ethics of research in general and this study specifically.

The background of this particular study is the harmful impact of CSA on victims and society as a whole. Although not all CSA is committed by paedophiles, they do account for a portion of offenders. Unfortunately, the very meaning of paedophilia is highly contested, and no satisfactory psychiatric, legal or other definition has yet been proposed. One of the reasons for this may be that conceiving of paedophilia as a homogenous phenomenon is ill-conceived. Various attempts have been made at formulating a taxonomy for paedophilia. These studies have gone some way to showing that certain broad categories of paedophile exist. However, these studies suffer from various methodological limitations. More specifically, study participants are likely to be untruthful, considering the legal implications surrounding any admission of CSA and the general societal condemnation of paedophiles. In addition, the maintenance of participant anonymity is difficult when there may be a legal or ethical conflict arises. Further, small sample sizes are problematic, as well as the tendency of clinicians to unintentionally influence the data during interactions with participants. A possible solution to these challenges is to find an environment accessible to researchers in which large numbers of self-defined paedophiles were present; where data could be obtained with limited interaction between clinicians and participants; where participant's anonymity is unlikely to be compromised; and where participants have less incentive to be untruthful.

### **3.2 Research Paradigm and Process**

This section explores the theoretical paradigms under which this research was undertaken. It will then explain the precise process of the research beginning with an exploration of the principles of grounded theory, and then moving on to the gathering and analysis of data.

### **3.2.1 Social constructivism.**

Weeks (1989) and Foucault (1976) have devoted considerable time to tracing the historical development of human sexuality. This approach highlights the degree to which human sexuality has shifted over time with taboo becoming accepted practice and vice versa. Howitt (1992) and Plummer (1995) emphasise how changing political and social norms have been a central factor, often even a driving force, in determining the difference between “normal” and “pathological” or “healthy” and “unhealthy”. Human sex may be largely biological but human sexuality is a phenomenon that is socially constructed to a large degree with notions of “normal” and “abnormal” sexuality changing extensively over time. Homosexuality’s progression from “sin” to “pathology”, and finally to a healthy part of human sexuality, largely accepted (at least in academia), is an illustrative example (Howitt, 1992; De Block & Adriaens, 2013).

This is, in brief, the social constructionist argument: that human sexuality is not an objective feature that can be discovered. It is rather a subjective experience that is negotiated between people. For this reason, definitive claims about the “truth” of human sexuality can rarely, if ever, be made. And having respect for how interpretation changes the reality of what is observed is a prerequisite for good social science research around sexuality. The constructionist perspective poses the question of how one can know that sexual contact between adults and children is morally wrong, given that sexual contact between adults and children has been accepted, or even encouraged, in a number of cultures at different times (Foucault, 1992; Bullough, 2005). Since sexuality has changed so much over time, how can one know that sexual contact between adults and children is morally wrong or mentally unhealthy? A common response is that adult-child sexual contact is always harmful to the child. This perspective is generally accepted in popular culture, and the fact that child sexual abuse can be extremely harmful to the victim is not in any doubt (Hunter, 2008). However, the notion of inevitable harm has come under limited criticism in academia, because of the possible existence of a small number of people who report that they experienced sexual contact with adults while they were children and did not experience any harm (Rind, Tromovitch, & Bauserman, 1998; Malon, 2010). Some consequently feel that the question remains open as to how one can universally condemn adult-child sexual contact.

One response to this notion is provided by Goode (2009). She argues that adult-child sexual contact is a violation of the rights of the child because it robs them of sexual agency.

Goode believes that all people have a right to explore their own sexuality, at their own pace, but that during sexual contact between an adult and a child the child's sexual identity is overwhelmed and suppressed beneath that of the adult, due to the inherently imbalanced power dynamic between them. Goode feels that this is unavoidable, firstly because the adult has a fully-developed sexual identity, while the child does not; and secondly because there is no way to grant the child the equal social power. Goode thus argues that sexual contact between adults and children is inherently a violation of the rights of the child and should remain universally condemned. Her arguments are convincing, and this approach helps to inform the standpoint from which the current study has been conducted. Nonetheless, the social constructionism approach has much to recommend it. For this reason, the paradigm of critical realism has been adopted for the purposes of this study.

### **3.2.2 Critical realism.**

Critical realism is an attempt to combine the most useful aspects of both social constructionism and realism, but what precisely that entails will require some explanation (Parker, 1992). Parker (1992) has argued that adding too much weight to the constructionist perspective encourages some researchers to adopt an "idealist" epistemology in which objective reality does not exist. He claims that this is a cynical, anti-positivist perspective within which science becomes merely one more discourse; unworthy of any special attention and without additional explanatory weight. It can further place the researcher in a position where they are forced to believe that they are unable to inform social change, or challenge structures of power, because their purpose is not to alter reality but merely to reinterpret it. This approach can encourage the belief that discourses are mere descriptions, barren of any true explanatory or proactive power.

At the same time, Parker continues that a total rejection of the constructionist perspective contains its own failings. It can lead one to conclude that reinterpretation is fruitless as a whole and that the only objects that are worthy of study are those that are quantifiable, measurable, and physical (Parker, 2002). Furthermore, it can discourage academics and researchers from conducting critical explorations of established social structures. This is problematic because structures of power are inherently self-sustaining. The primary activity of any structure of power is to perpetuate its own existence. Thus, the very fact that they have power implies that this power will be used to maintain the orthodoxy within which that power was created (Foucault, 1976).

A potential means of resolving the tensions created by these two poles of thought is by uniting them in what Parker (1992) calls “critical realism”. In this approach one seeks to acknowledge the socially-constructed and historically-situated nature of human knowledge, including scientific knowledge, while also accepting the fact that science is an attempt to describe things that have a certain amount of existence beyond discourse. Some things do still exist even when no one talks about them, but since it is impossible to fully understand them without talking about them it behoves the researcher to be critical of what people, particularly themselves, say. Having identified the paradigm adopted for this study, it is now necessary to describe the study’s context and methodology.

### **3.3 The Deep Web and the Darknet**

In order to understand the current study, it is important that the reader gain an understanding of background about the nature of the “deep web” and the “darknet”. The deep web is a collection of websites and other content that are not indexed by search engines and are not available for most Internet users to access. This may sound sinister but in reality, most of the content on the deep web is benign. It is secret because it is controlled by individuals who have good reason to keep it so. It includes private business data, the private parts of all of our social media accounts, the content of our online banking statements, all of the emails in the world, and so on. Given the variety of content that falls under such a broad heading it is sometimes said that the deep web is larger than the visible Internet, and this may well be true (Kiss, 2013).

The ‘darknet’ is different but is also not entirely sinister. The darknet consists of parts of the deep web that can only be accessed using specialised software such as “TOR” and “Freenet”. Freenet is a piece of software via which users can access Freenet websites. Each user allocates part of their computer’s hard drive to Freenet, that then uses it to store data. These data are encrypted so the users themselves cannot know what is being stored there. In this way Freenet’s contents are spread throughout all of its users and as such can never be destroyed. Additionally, all users have plausible deniability of their activities, since any illegal content that they control will be stored on hard drives belonging to other users (Goode, 2009).

Conversely, TOR is anonymizing software promoted and maintained by free speech activists. It is intended primarily as a means to circumvent Internet censorship and guard one’s identity when online. A prominent example of a TOR user is the online “hacktivist” collective



known as “Anonymous”, who in 2009 helped people in Iran broadcast pictures and videos of police assaulting protesters. Similarly, in 2011 they assisted “Arab Spring” revolutionaries in their struggles. In both cases TOR was one of the most common method used to give protesters a voice that eluded governmental censorship efforts. However, the use of TOR in this way and the actions of Anonymous have largely escaped the attention by the popular media (Casserly, 2015). TOR is functionally identical to any other web browser that one might use. However, unlike other browsers it reroutes one’s connection through those of multiple other TOR users before it attempts to access anything online. Thus, every user on TOR appears to be someone else.

TOR also deletes all data that relates to the user after each session as a further aid to anonymity. This is one reason why TOR has also been favoured by whistle-blowers such as Edward Snowden. However, due to its nature as an anonymizing service it is impossible to tell how people will use TOR. Thus, it is often used to disseminate IIOC, or engage in other illegal activities (Kiss, 2013). For this reason, international law enforcement attempt to identify the companies and individuals who maintain TOR websites, as well as the nature of the websites; the aim being to investigate illegal activities. This phenomenon posed a challenge for the current study when one such action by law enforcement ended the data-gathering stage of the project, by destroying most of the websites on TOR catering for paedophiles. TOR had been used by this researcher to access the websites used in this research because, as they could not be accessed by any other means.

In brief, what took place was that towards the end of 2013 a man was arrested in Ireland and charged with possession of IIOC. He was the owner of “Freedom Hosting” which was responsible for maintaining a large number of the websites on TOR. The man’s arrest gave the authorities a “back door” into these websites and they used this to gather information on people who were distributing IIOC across TOR. Once they had learned all they could, they shut Freedom Hosting down which instantly removed dozens of websites from the darknet. This included some of the afore-mentioned whistle-blowing services, a diverse selection of other websites, and both of the sites used in this study (Poulsen, 2013). Fortunately, sufficient data had already been saved and thus the project could continue. Several of the sites that were removed had been created specifically for the distribution and storage of IIOC. Thus, the shutdown of Freedom Hosting is likely to be one of the most significant blows ever struck against the spread of IIOC (Best, 2014).



### 3.4 Two Websites

The study's analysis began by exploring a secret, darknet website for self-identified paedophiles. However, as the process continued it became apparent that a second website existed that was also of significance to the study. The two websites were called the "Pedophile Support Community" website (PSCW) and the "Hurt 2 the Core" website (H2CW). Both sites followed a design that is quite common amongst website discussion forums. In brief, each site had a "front page" which displayed the different sub-sections that the site was divided into. Each sub-section was in turn devoted to a single topic such as "Introductions" or "General". On the H2CW there were also a number of "members-only" sub-sections devoted to specific types of IIOC. Each sub-section was in turn filled with various discussions called "threads". Threads begin when a member of a site 'posts' a question or comment. Other members respond to this post and then later members in turn react to these responses. In this way the discussion proceeds. Typically, a few people will react directly to each other and will post multiple times (forming a sub-conversation) while other members will post lone statements that are briefly noted or ignored. Thus, each thread starts with an initial topic that spawns several small discussions based around that topic, with all posters providing their thoughts and opinions.

Both PSCW and H2TC were concerned with paedophilia. However, the content and mood of the two sites was quite different. The PSCW did not host any IIOC and the site's administrators advised that anyone who attempted to post IIOC would be excluded from the site. The H2CW on the other hand actively solicited IIOC. Membership on both sites was free and could be acquired within minutes, however upon joining the H2CW one was only permitted to access the discussion threads, not the IIOC. Only once an individual had taken part in some of the discussions was their membership upgraded to a higher level that enabled them to access some the site's IIOC. In addition, if they also uploaded their own IIOC they then unlocked a higher level of access to IIOC for "elite" members. This provided members with an incentive to add IIOC to the site. The stated purpose of the two sites was also different. The PSCW's creators said that the site was intended as a safe and accepting community. The H2CW was intended as a place to discuss 'hurtcore': violent and sadistic IIOC.

### 3.2.3 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory refers to the process by which a theory is developed specifically for a certain circumstance, topic, or other source of data. The purpose of grounded theoretic research is to create a theory that explains the observed phenomena (Roth, 2005). It is intended as a means of creating a formal, substantive theory that is developed inductively from the gathered data. The approach was initially proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a method for deriving explanatory theories that were not inferred from the dominant theories of the time, which may have discouraged innovation or new interpretation. Charmaz (2006) continues the discussion by arguing that there is indeed a tendency to view new data through the lenses of established “truths”. And furthermore, that there is the possibility that the theoretical constructs used by established schools of thought are likely to shape the research process, and thus its results, in ways that are difficult for the researcher to counteract. The solution proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was to tie the theory directly to the data as a means to ensure that the theory was valid, at least for that particular dataset. Considering the potential methodological weaknesses of previous studies aimed at investigating potential subtypes of paedophilia, grounded theory seemed to be a good methodological tool to employ. The data would be more likely to speak for itself, instead of existing thinking influencing the researcher in unhelpful ways.

Glaser and Strauss further argue that the entire process of data collection and analysis should not be divorced from the final theory. For this reason, they established a particular series of steps that researchers were encouraged to follow. More recently other theorists have adopted and adapted the approach arguing that there are a number of different ways to conduct valid grounded theoretic research (Denscombe, 2003). The process typically begins by identifying a viable area for research. Grounded theory is most useful in areas that are under-researched or have not been the focus of research at all. This would seem to apply to the topic of this work, since the researcher was not able to find many comparable studies. Thus, grounded theory seemed the most appropriate research method. Naturally, determining where these under-researched areas are involves exploring the current research literature. However, this initial step can sometimes pose a problem for the grounded theoretic researcher, because one of the original tenets of grounded theory was that one should not delve too deeply into prior research before beginning the project (Charmaz, 2006).

This may seem counter-intuitive as it is a very different approach to many other forms of research. The argument that Glaser and Strauss (1967) made was that the intention of

grounded theory is to be influenced by the data as much as possible and by prior research as little as possible. They felt that being overly familiar with the research literature could predispose the scholar to perpetuating the orthodoxies of their field, whatever they might be. However, more recent researchers have argued that this principle can be taken too far, and that a thorough reading of the literature can inform rather than prejudice the research, provided the researcher remains cognizant and critical of such potential effects (Goulding, 2002).

Grounded theory further states that once a research area has been chosen the researcher must decide what types of data to gather and how best to gather them. Grounded theory typically revolves around qualitative data but there is no concrete reason why quantitative data cannot be included (Glaser, 2008). In the case of this study the data gathering was constrained by what was available on the identified darknet websites. Fortunately, what was available included in-depth discussions around a number of topics relating to paedophilia, expressed anonymously by participants. As such it constituted a very rich set of data. In point of fact the volume of data available on the PSCW was such that it could not all be included in the study. The site contained tens of thousands of discussion threads, often with hundreds of responses each, most of which were at least a few sentences long. There were quite literally millions of words that could be studied. For this reason, the data needed to be sampled in some way.

Grounded theory follows an approach of “theoretical sampling” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In theoretical sampling one acknowledges that if a researcher truly intends to allow the research process to be guided by the emerging theory then one cannot know the precise dimensions of the study area. Nor can one know what limitations can be, or should be, placed upon the gathering of data. Thus, the researcher must initially create approximate limits for the study but must be able to move beyond them as needed (Goulding, 2002). This occurred in the current study when the research area was expanded to include the H2CW. Grounded theory states further that as the analysis of the data progresses potential theories will be developed. The researcher can then seek out data that are needed to confirm, refute, or expand these theories. This forms part of a procedure within which the researcher will constantly compare different aspects of the data with one another, and the data with the emerging theory. As was discussed above it was a necessary limitation of this research that it could not expand beyond the identified sites due to legal and practical concerns. However, further investigation within each site was possible and often necessary.

Initially, it was thought that the researcher might wish to focus on discussion threads whose topics appeared to relate most closely with the research questions. However, this approach was abandoned once data gathering began and instead the study focused its attention on the most popular threads on the PSCW; those threads that had at least a few pages of responses. It was thought that the popularity of these threads implied that the topics they covered were the ones regarded as most important by the participants and that this in turn made them a more likely source of meaningful data. As the data gathering and analysis process continued it became evident that the PSCW and H2CW seemed to evidence certain subtypes of paedophile.

The analysis began by performing open coding on the data. In this process one systematically reads through the data to identify words and phrases that provide insight into the topic of the research. These key topics are then assigned a “code”: a brief descriptive title that represents the concept that is relevant to the data (Denscombe, 2003). Charmaz (2006) warns the researcher against the use of complex language or technical terminology when naming codes. Such language can make a code’s precise meaning difficult to understand to anyone besides the original researcher. She recommends that such terminology be kept to a minimum and simple language be used as far as possible.

The data are then further read and reread and segments that relate to the newly-created codes are highlighted or “coded” and allocated to the appropriate key topic. As this process continues the researcher can gather additional data that relates to the codes which may prompt the creation of further codes, or the refinement of existing ones. This process of reading the data, coding it, gathering more data, refining and developing the existing list of codes, and then reading the data again proceeds until preliminary saturation is reached. “Saturation” refers to the point at which new codes are not being identified despite the addition of new data (Roth, 2005). Once this point is reached it concludes the open coding process and the research moves on to axial coding.

Axial coding is similar to open coding in that it involves creating codes and coding the data. However, while open coding is aimed merely at categorising sequences of data axial coding adds to the process by attempting to reveal any relationships that may exist between the initial codes. Thus, the purpose of axial coding is to create higher order codes that explain how key concepts within the data relate to one another (Goulding, 2002). Understanding these relationships is the beginning of the development of the new theory.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that the theories that grounded theory creates are fundamentally about the relationships between socially constructed objects. These relationships allow the researcher to identify explanatory concepts during the axial coding process that relate to multiple identified codes. In turn, these explanatory concepts are examined in an attempt to reveal further relationships in order to create “categories”. These constitute an even higher level of understanding. Finally, by fully exploring the interrelationship between these categories, a “core category” can finally be identified. The core category is a single idea that explains a large amount of the data that is of central importance to the new theory. In order for the core category to be valid it must relate meaningfully to the other categories and it must be of key significance to the new theory (Goulding, 2002).

To illustrate how this process can play out, an example from this study will be used. During the initial open coding phase, a number of cases were identified in which descriptions were given about children indicating to a potential abuser that they did not enjoy certain non-sexual activities (being tickled for example). The code “dislike” was assigned to these sections. As the study progressed a number of other codes were developed which covered multiple other forms of resistance displayed by children to the actions of paedophiles. These were combined into the higher order category “resistance” which provided a broader, more generalised description of how children fought back against trickery, coercion, force, and abuse on the part of child sexual abusers. In turn this “category” related to other categories that covered how some of the participants spoke about children resisting their attempts at manipulation, as well as how they overcame this resistance practically and rationalised it cognitively.

A second example could be the code “affection” which began as mere instances of any sort of affection found in the data. Related higher order codes and categories that were identified dealt with descriptions of what affection meant to the participants, how they conceptualised appropriate and inappropriate forms of affection, how they used accepted forms of affection to segue into inappropriate forms and so on. A number of these categories helped to inform the core category of the first part of the study: “It’s not about sexual abuse” a notion that attempts to summarise the participant’s descriptions and justifications of their various behaviours. It will be discussed in depth in the next chapter.

Incorporating the second website led to an extension of the study’s scope. Initial coding of H2CW seemed to produce codes and categories notably different to those found on PSCW. It was decided that the best way to proceed would be to attempt a comparison between the

typical users of each site. Further coding seemed to reveal that there might be distinct subtypes of paedophile inhabiting the two websites. The various categories that emerged from the coding related to whether the various participants exhibited paedophilia, were sadistic, would act on their attraction to children if given the option, and whether an awareness that they were inflicting harm would cause them to stop the abuse. This led to the second core category of the study: “Four key questions”. This will be discussed and explained in detail in the next chapter. Glaser (2008) states that a new grounded theory can fit into and enhance existing theories, or else can serve as a critique of them. Once this study’s new theories were developed the literature around paedophilia and child sexual abuse was revisited and it was found that the new theory fits into and enhances the existing research. This will be discussed in the final chapter of the thesis.

### **3.2 The Study’s Corpus**

Markham and Baym (2009) have put it forward that defining the precise research area in an online space is difficult because of the ways in which websites ceaselessly link to one another. In online discussions users will typically offer a link to the object of the discussion, and this will often be located on a different website. Therefore, a researcher who attempts to understand the discussion may need to visit a website that is not part of their original research area. This is a valid point, but it is one that this research was compelled to disregard. As has been stated previously there is a genuine danger of encountering IIOC and other illegal content on the darknet if one is not careful. Precautions were of course taken against this eventuality (described towards the end of this chapter) but those precautions would mean little if the researcher began following links to destinations unknown. Thus, the research was restricted to the two websites under examination, and nowhere else.

The corpus of this study was drawn from multiple discussion threads such as those described above. To be precise the total corpus consisted of 667 pages of responses from the PSCW and 267 from the H2CW. Each page typically had 15 “posts” (although the final page of a thread could have fewer since the point at which a thread peters out is essentially random). This provided a total of approximately 13 000 text posts from various users of the two sites. Responses varied from a single word to roughly a thousand words, but typical responses consisted of a few sentences. A “screenshot” of a fairly typical page has been included as appendix B. In order to maximise the possibility that the data were truly representative of the

discussions that were taking place on the two sites the researcher limited the data to only include threads of at least three pages.

The reason for the disparity in the number of pages taken from each site was due to the two sites being very different in size. Before they were shut down, the PSCW had around 1400 members whereas the H2CW had only around 200. The PSCW had also been around for far longer than the H2CW; a few years as opposed to a few months. In addition to this, responses on the H2CW tended to be shorter than those on the PSCW. Naturally, this presented a challenge for the analysis. This problem was dealt with by regarding each site as separate for the purposes of saturation, i.e. once saturation had been reached on the PSCW further analysis continued on the H2CW to seek saturation there as well. In line with the principals of grounded theory new discoveries from the H2CW provoked further analysis of the PSCW, and vice versa. Ultimately, around 20 percent more threads from the H2CW needed to be coded and analysed before dual saturation was reached. The coded threads contained around 60 participants per website, and over 130 participants in total. The precise nature of the participants themselves will be discussed in the following section.

### **3.4 Sampling**

All participants consisted of registered members of the PSCW and the H2CW. The registration processes of the sites differed in ways that are relevant to this study and they will thus be discussed separately.

#### **3.4.1 Registering on the PSCW.**

The PSCW described itself as an “accepting community”. It was created for paedophiles, but was open to anyone who wished to join, provided they obeyed the website’s rules. All of the discussion threads were freely visible to non-members but if one wished to post in any of the discussions one would need to create an account. At the beginning of the data collection process, one could create a temporary “guest” account but those had limited functionality and were later removed due to abuse; that is to say that people made guest accounts in order to “verbally” abuse the site’s members. Full membership was obtained via an application process. The researcher identified himself as a psychologist conducting research about darknet websites



for paedophiles and asked whether he could join the site for the purposes of data gathering. The administrators of the site agreed provided that the community rules were observed. The rules were very much like the rules of any discussion website. It was required that individuals be respectful and polite to one another, including the right of individuals to disagree and argue. However, in addition to this the site made it a rule that members of the site should assume that other members were being truthful in their responses, unless evidence to the contrary presented itself. This appeared to have been done because of the pervasive belief that law enforcement agents were infiltrating all darknet paedophile communities in an effort to identify members for prosecution. The concern was that if members began accusing one another of being “infiltrators”, the community would be damaged by the irresolvable arguments that would follow. Similarly, the site had a rule that any information that might be used to personally identify an individual was strictly banned. This was presumably both for the benefit of the members themselves and also for the community as a whole. If an individual member was identified by law enforcement, they might be pressured into becoming an informant. This could in turn compromise the security of the entire website. It was in the interest of all of the site’s members to guard one another’s anonymity. The researcher agreed to abide by the community’s rules and was granted membership of the site, which facilitated data gathering.

#### **3.4.2 Registration on the H2CW.**

As with the PSCW anyone could join the H2CW. All that was needed was to create an account with a username and a password. This provided one with access to a collection of “Discussion” forums and the “General” section. If members wished to access the two sections that were concerned with IIOC one had to demonstrate one’s commitment to the community by taking part in the community’s discussions. Once one had done this, one’s membership was automatically upgraded. This process provided both an advantage and a danger to the researcher. The boundary that separated the IIOC and discussion sections was advantageous because it provided an additional barrier between the researcher and accidental exposure to IIOC. However, it also meant that if the researcher joined the site and engaged in discussions with the members then this barrier would be removed.

Nevertheless, since the discussion sections were visible by everyone, whether they were members or not, it was decided that the researcher would not join the site. Instead they would view and save the discussion threads from the outside. One might argue that it is unethical to



record the members' responses without their consent and this issue is certainly worth considering. It will be discussed in the section on ethics below.

### **3.4.3 Participants.**

Defining the participants of one's study is typically a key stage in the research process. Many variables that relate to the composition of the population from which the data are gathered are relevant to the study as a whole, and the relevance of these variables is often not fully understood until later in the study (Silverman, 2005). Unfortunately, defining the participants of this study in any meaningful and complete way is impossible. This is due to the anonymizing effects of TOR and the fact that the participants of the two websites actively sought to hide any information that might identify them. Thus, the description of this study's participants is necessarily vague.

In brief the participants of this study are people with a professed sexual attraction to individuals who are below the legal age of consent. They are also people who frequent websites on the darknet that are dedicated to the discussion of paedophilia. The participant's "targets of attraction" are most often around the age of puberty, but they may be as young as infancy. Again, due to the anonymous nature of these websites the gathering of precise demographic data was not possible. The participants represented a wide age range, an unknown number of countries of origin, differing levels of education and technical ability, different levels of experience in committing acts of child sexual abuse, different personal abuse histories, and many different religious and political beliefs. And all of them were at least wealthy enough, and had sufficient technical savvy, to find their way onto the dark side of the Internet. All of the participants were able to communicate in English with some degree of proficiency (although it may not have been their first language). Those participants who listed their gender overwhelmingly claimed to be male. But some did state that they were female, and many refused to list their gender. These users could be male, female, or non-binary. Since an unknown number of members of both sites were women it would be misleading to use male pronouns to describe the participants. For these reasons it was decided to use the gender-neutral pronoun 'they' to refer to all participants whether in singular or plural. This will be discussed further below.

While one can be fairly certain that most of these sites' members were paedophiles it cannot be said that all of them were. For instance, two of the members of the PSCW stated that they were teenagers, and while their precise age cannot be known with certainty it is possible that they would fail to fulfil the diagnostic criteria for paedophilia. Similarly, when a so-called "pedosurvey" was conducted on the H2CW one of the participants stated that their age of attraction began at the age of seventeen. Another stated that their age of attraction began at fifteen. Thus, these two individuals also fail to fulfil the diagnostic criteria for paedophilia. Given these various difficulties, it was decided to not make any claims regarding the demographics of the participants beyond things that could be clearly shown within the data.

That being said, it should be noted that, aside from the two participants described above, all of the other roughly 120 participants professed to be attracted to pubertal or pre-pubertal children. In addition, many of the H2CW's participants expressed a sadistic interest in children or were at least tolerant of those that did. That being said, no claims can be made about these participants being a representative sample of paedophiles as a whole, or even of paedophiles who use the darknet. They form, by necessity, a convenience sample with all of the limitations that this implies. This is one of the reasons why the findings of this study may not be generalizable.

### **3.5 Ethical Clearance**

Ethical clearance for the study was granted at the proposal stage of this study. The study proposal was assessed by an ethics review panel convened by the researcher's university's Psychology Department. In reaching their decision to grant ethical clearance and to allow the researcher to proceed with this study, they consulted the literature, interviewed the researcher as well as the researcher's academic supervisor.

### **3.6 Ethics and Research on the Internet**

Online research must be conducted with attention paid to the same considerations of ethics that all research is constrained by. These include such aspects such as respect for the humanity and privacy of research participants, a commitment to conducting research that is accurate and reliable, and so on (Roth, 2005). However, many of these concerns take on an added dimension when research is taken into an online space. The ethics of conducting research on the Internet

are inextricably tied to the nature of the Internet itself. Every ethical issue will be affected by the character of the Internet and cannot be dealt with separately from it (Convery & Cox, 2012). For example, maintaining the anonymity of one's research participants is a crucial part of research ethics. However, the issue becomes more complicated when one is dealing only with nicknames (or "nicks"), instead of participants' actual names. One might assume that since the participants are already using pseudonyms that no further changes to their names are needed. In actuality, however, many individuals on the Internet use the same nick across multiple sites. Additionally, the issue of confidentiality is particularly important in online research due to the fact that the Internet makes the dissemination of private information on a large scale both easy and irreversible (Markham & Baym, 2009).

The Internet researcher's task is made difficult due to the fact that there are no generally accepted ethical guidelines for online research. Indeed, there is a large degree of disagreement among academics about what constitutes ethical online research (Lambert and O'Halloran, 2008). In addition to this both technology and the online cultural space are changing so rapidly that any standard ethical guidelines can become outdated before they can be revised. For example, ethical guidelines around emails, that have a certain degree of permanency, may be inappropriate for Snapchat, a service where messages automatically delete themselves after a set period of time. Moreover, the temporary nature of Snapchat raises an additional question: if one is communicating with a respondent via Snapchat (or similar service) then there is clearly an assumption that what they say will not be recorded. How then can one ethically gather such data?

These challenges in defining proper online ethics mean that it is the researcher's responsibility to engage with the debates around these issues and then provide a justification for why the approach they have used can be considered truly ethical. Indeed, some have argued that the only way to conduct ethical Internet research is by engaging in transparent self-discussion about the issues that one has faced, and the rationale behind one's decisions (Knobel, 2003). Such is the goal of this section of the thesis.

### **3.6.1 Informed consent, privacy and confidentiality.**

The issue of informed consent is far more complex in an online space than in an offline one, and it requires more nuance. For example, in online spaces the lines between private and public

can become blurred. Some online content (online banking for example) is completely private. Others, such as blogs, are deliberately public. But many sites operate somewhere between the two. Facebook, and other social media websites, allow users to generate both private and public content, and the content is often linked directly to an individual by their real name, photographs, and other personally-identifying information. Furthermore, online content can often persist far longer than one initially intended and if one has posted something to a website that one does not control then one may have no means of erasing it later. Thus, negotiating informed consent around online content is difficult, not least because certain content may not be under the control of the person who created it, and due to the fact that people may not fully understand how the lines between private and public have already been drawn by the technology itself (Atkinson, & DePalma, 2008).

All of these factors pose challenges to a researcher who is attempting to navigate the distinctions between what is private and what is public. Articles have even been retracted from research journals for (it has been argued) failing to adequately respect users' right to privacy ("Retraction: Recursive fury: Conspiracist ideation in the blogosphere in response to research on conspiracist ideation", 2014). In the cited example a group of researchers used quotations that were publicly available, but they did not account for the fact that direct quotes can easily be found using a Google search. In other words, one can put the quote directly into Google and be immediately taken to the person who said it (Lewandowsky, Cook, Oberauer, & Marriott, 2013). In such a circumstance allocating pseudonyms to one's participants is meaningless because anyone with an Internet connection can identify the true author within seconds (Dawson, 2014). This poses a legitimate challenge for many online researchers.

Fortunately, this issue does not affect the current research project for several reasons. Firstly, the quotations used in this study are only publicly viewable if one is already on the darknet; they cannot be found on the "clearnet" at all. Secondly, since darknet websites are by definition not indexed by search engines one cannot conduct online searches for them. Lastly, even if one did track down the original quote, all that would be found would be an online alias; one specifically designed and maintained to hide the poster's real identity; the poster would never share information that could be used to identify them. However, these factors were not sufficient protection for the participants' anonymity. It has been noted (Markham & Baym, 2009) that it is quite common for users of the Internet to use the same nick across multiple websites. It is possible, though highly unlikely, that one of the study's participants may use the same nick on the relevant darknet paedophile website and a 'clearnet' website. If they did so

someone might be able to determine their true identity. Furthermore, there is the more likely possibility that accounts of non-paedophiles may exist that simply appear similar to those of one of the participants. Hypothetically, one participant might have a nick that relates to a popular celebrity. It is almost certain that other users of the Internet would use similar or identical nicks that relate to the celebrity in question. Thus, if the participants' nicks became widely known then unrelated individuals might be falsely identified as having paedophilia, with all of the negative consequences that might entail. In any case it is standard practice to anonymize the names of one's participants (Dawson, 2014) and since the nicks are the only names that have been received it was decided to replace them with a simple alphanumeric code.

The code has two parts with the first designating the website the respondent was posting on (either 'PSC' or 'H2C') and the second part simply being a number that corresponds to them. Thus, the first respondent from the PSCW is referred to as 'PSC1' and the fiftieth respondent from the H2CW has been designated as 'H2C50'. A further aid to the anonymity of the participants is the use of gender-neutral pronouns mentioned above. This is done except in circumstances in which the respondent's gender is relevant to the discussion. Thus, when discussing a post made by H2C22 the researcher would not say "he posted in the discussion" but would instead say "they posted in the discussion". A secondary reason why this has been done is because there already exists an inaccurate perception amongst the general public that paedophilia is almost exclusively a male paraphilia (Hayes & Carpenter, 2013). Creating research that seems to reinforce this notion could be considered unscientific and thus genderless pronouns are a necessary alternative.

Ensuring the security of all data relating to the study was another necessary step in maintaining confidentiality in this research. Keeping confidential data secure is another standard practice in research but when the data is wholly electronic there are added dangers (Ashford, 2009). It is comparably difficult from a practical standpoint to violate the privacy of participants by stealing or disseminating hard copies of confidential data. However, all of the data for this study are stored in the form of .htm files (i.e. webpages). If someone were to gain unauthorised access to these data, then exposing them would quite literally be as simple as sending an email. For this reason, all of the data were uploaded to a secure cloud server that only the researcher had access to and any additional access to either the cloud server account or the research computers was limited to the researcher and no one else.

A final challenge relates to the issue of age. Two of the participants stated that they were teenagers, but it cannot be known with certainty how old they were. They may have been under the age of eighteen. It is accepted practice to ask parents or guardians for permission before including people who are underage in research. But in this case doing so was impossible. It bears noting however that it is not unusual for some paedophiles to create online profiles in which they pretend that they are much younger than they are, as part of an elaborate sexual role play (Quayle and Taylor, 2001). It should also be noted that even if both participants had been under the age of 18 at the time their messages were posted both will be well over that age before these findings are published. It is also worth noting that both participants were given the option of withdrawing from the research study and both declined to do so. This will be discussed further below.

### **3.6.2 Informed consent on the PSCW.**

On the PSCW all discussions were viewable by anyone whether they were members of the site or not. It is felt by many researchers that if an individual posts something in a forum that they know to be public, then it can be reasonably assumed that they are aware that their posts will be viewable by everyone, and thus they do not have any assumption of privacy (Hewson, Yule, Laurent & Vogel, 2003). This is different to the private messages that members can covertly send to one another. Nonetheless it was decided that since practical methods for achieving informed consent did exist that informed consent would be sought from the community as a whole.

Unfortunately, the nature of discussion websites, where individuals may enter into communication and then leave never to return, makes providing informed consent impossible to achieve on an individual basis (Markham & Baym, 2009). A way around this issue is to inform the website as a whole of one's role as a researcher and provide them with the means to contact the researcher if they wish to gain further information or opt out of the study. To ensure that the largest number of the site's users were informed about the research and given the option to opt out of being participants, a discussion thread was started by the researcher to explain the process and answer any questions.

The thread was well received, and multiple site members commented voicing concerns and asking for clarification on certain issues. Several members also privately messaged the researcher to get additional questions answered. Ultimately, none of the site's members opted

out of the research. The process was repeated later to remind the site's members that the research was ongoing and to encourage them to message the researcher or opt out if they had any concerns. Once again none of the site's members chose to opt out, even though the thread itself was noticed and commented on.

### **3.6.3 Informed consent on the H2CW.**

As mentioned previously gaining membership of the H2CW was not practical for various reasons, but a lack of membership meant that obtaining informed consent by communicating with the site's members was impossible. Fortunately, the site's structure made informed consent unnecessary. The reasons why this is the case will take some explanation. In contrast with the PSCW, the H2CW's members knew that some parts of the site were public, and others were private. They posted messages in the general section knowing that they could be read by everyone. There was no assumption of confidentiality nor of privacy. Their discussions about the sexual torture of children took place in what was a public space and thus using them for research purposes was not a breach of privacy (Convery & Cox 2012). Furthermore, it was taken for granted by the site's members that agents of law enforcement would be reading their messages in an attempt to identify and arrest them. Thus, it was also understood that the messages might be used for purposes to which they did not consent. Once again there was no assumption of privacy and this did not discourage members from posting.

A further point worth noting is that while the researcher has a responsibility to the participants, they also have a responsibility to science and to act to the benefit of society as a whole (Convery & Cox, 2012). If the freely-available posts were not included in the study, then no alternative means of obtaining those data was available. This would have weakened the study and impeded the advancement of research on paedophilia as a whole, and sadistic paedophilia in particular. Naturally, this consideration could never override the wellbeing of the participants, which must always be of primary concern. However, given that the participants were operating in the knowledge that their posts would be taken and used for other purposes it was not unethical to use them to enhance this research. Nevertheless, it was decided that once the study was concluded that all data from the H2CW would be destroyed rather than making it available to other researchers. This will be discussed further below.

#### **3.6.4 Debriefing.**

It had been planned that a debriefing procedure of sorts would be facilitated by starting threads on the PSCW in which the main findings of the study would be discussed with the participants. Unfortunately, both websites disappeared from the darknet in the wake of the shutdown of Freedom Hosting. This is a potential ethical limitation, but it should be noted that all appropriate steps had been taken to operate ethically, that the shutdown could not have been anticipated and was out of the researcher's control, and that no viable alternative was made available to the researcher.

#### **3.7 Legal Concerns and the Wellbeing of the Researcher**

It should be noted that the current study did not involve any illegal content of any kind and was concerned only with online discussions between self-identified paedophiles. It should also be noted that while graphic descriptions of abuse have been kept to an absolute minimum there is nevertheless some content contained within this thesis that may be troubling to some readers. Lastly, while it may be understandable to express disgust or rage at the actions of some of the participants, particularly those who engage in sadistic child abuse, such a tone is inappropriate in an academic medium. For this reason, the language used in this thesis when discussing child abuse, paedophilia, and related issues has purposefully been kept neutral. While the PSCW did not host any illegal content and could thus be visited without any concerns over illegality the H2CW was quite different. Part of its stated purpose was as a locus for the distribution of violent IIOC. This placed the researcher in danger of breaking the law with regards to IIOC simply by visiting the site. This will require a small amount of explanation.

The problem is that whenever one views content on the Internet, a photograph for example, one can only view that content because a copy of it has been downloaded and is sitting on one's computer. Every image, sound file, movie, or webpage that one has ever viewed on the Internet was at one point sitting in a temporary folder on one's hard drive. Thus, if the researcher visited the H2CW and saw a pornographic image they would instantly be guilty of the possession of IIOC, because a copy of it would be on their computer hard drive. The section of the H2CW that the researcher intended to visit was supposed to be the non-pornographic part, as was mentioned above. However, there was nothing to prevent the site's members from posting such content wherever they liked.



There was also the added concern of what effect sudden exposure to sadistic IIOC might have on the researcher themselves. This turned out to be a valid concern given how taxing merely reading discussions around the topic proved to be later. Thus, before data could be gathered the researcher needed to find a way of guaranteeing that they would not be exposed to any illegal content, that still facilitated the gathering of data. Fortunately, a rather elegant solution was discovered: the researcher simply disabled all images on the TOR browser. This ensured that even if pornographic images (including the ‘thumbnail’ images usually associated with online video) were posted they would be ignored by the browser, they would not be downloaded, and the researcher would not be exposed to them. This was an effective solution because it removed all potentially illegal content while keeping the webpages themselves essentially whole (albeit in a rather Spartan form) and it left all of the text, the key data that were being sought, completely unaltered.

A final concern over illegality was that the researcher would become privy to discussions over a variety of criminal activities, including the creation of IIOC and acts of child sexual abuse itself. As part of the study’s ethical clearance it had already been decided that if any of the study’s participants disclosed anything about illegal activity, that might be of use to law enforcement, then such information would be shared with the appropriate policing agency. It was predicted that this would not take place due to the effort that the members of these sites take to obscure their identity. Over the course of the study this indeed proved to be the case. No information that might directly identify anyone who was engaging in illegal activity was discovered.

### **3.8 Trustworthiness of the study.**

There is no universally accepted meaning of trustworthiness, however criteria which are commonly used are i) credibility; ii) transferability; iii) dependability; iv) confirmability; and reflexivity as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Some discussion of these, particularly as related to the current study, will now be made.

#### **3.8.1 Credibility.**

Credibility is concerned with the extent to which something may be presumed truthful. Research strategies to increase credibility levels include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and member check. The latter refers in large part to the degree to which findings and assumptions can be checked with members (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

In this research, engagement with participants was sustained and prolonged over a period of years. By recording data that was provided on the websites for years and over the course of many thousands of interactions, the researcher was able to familiarise himself with the data in great depth. Likewise, the multiple data points and the ability to easily data check, by engaging with participants and asking relevant clarifying questions, helps in lending credibility to the conclusions of the study.

The researcher constantly read and reread the data so as to analyse it. This led to theorization, and attendant revision of concepts when warranted. Recoding and re-labelling of codes, concepts and the core category was done. Data was studied until the final theory provided the intended depth of explanatory insight for what had been observed. Likewise, it was of importance to the research that data triangulation took place. In this case, data was gathered at different times of day and year and from a relatively large number of different participants.

Naturally it is impossible to know whether participants in research studies, and online research studies especially, are lying to the researcher. Furthermore, the anonymity afforded by the Internet may in some instances make people behave in ways that are dishonest (Zimbler & Feldman, 2011). However, as argued by some researchers (Ashford, 2009) it is worth facing these challenges since online research affords unique opportunities to study certain groups (and self-professed paedophiles certainly qualify as a group that would be less likely to disclose personal information in most settings).

The anonymity of the Internet (and the even greater anonymity of the darknet) creates a space where “deviant” groups can have open discussions that could not easily take place elsewhere. And furthermore, these discussions are often available for outsiders to view; Ashford uses the metaphor of a “panopticon in reverse” whereby Internet-based groups consist of the few being observed by the many. This peculiar arrangement provides opportunities for the researcher that cannot be found elsewhere. Additionally, some researchers argue that individuals are actually more likely to be honest in an online space in situations where honesty would normally carry with it some sort of danger. Atkinson and DePalma (2008) apply this idea specifically to deviant sexualities and state that their research suggests that anonymity encourages greater truthfulness in such cases. Lastly, it should again be noted that all research carries the risk of participant disingenuousness, and there is very little that can be done about this by a researcher other than he or she being aware of it.

Beyond all of these considerations strengthening the credibility of the study, it should be furthermore noted that with much of the data transcribed, it is easy for future researchers or people scrutinising the research to see that the conclusions have a solid foundation within the emergent information gathered from participants.

### **3.8.2 Transferability**

Since the research recorded the descriptive data in great depth (thousands of instances of online exchanges) most researchers should be able to ascertain, in a relatively easy manner, whether the context of this research is applicable to their own contexts. This transferability judgment is naturally made by future researchers, but the current researcher has endeavoured to work and record the work in such a way that this judgment can be easily made.

### **3.8.3 Dependability and Confirmability.**

This research followed acceptable standards of grounded theory design, and through its exhaustive data recording it allows future researchers relatively easy opportunity to confirm its conclusions and to replicate similar conditions of research. To as large an extent as possible, conclusions were consistently grounded in the data, rather than being based on personal bias, in line with a grounded theory approach. Notes taken in the work allow for an easy audit trail, and in conjunction with transcripts the process of this research is purposefully transparent.

Repeated revision of theory, in conjunction with emergent data, is likewise in line with grounded theoretic researcher. Initial attempts to offer explanatory theories in some measure failed and were refined, as is to be expected. Notes of the various theories throughout the process were kept, elements deemed faulty were discarded or refined, all so that a robust explanation of data was eventually possible (see Charmaz, 2006).

Commonly, graphical depiction of theories is given in such work, and many rough notes are kept by a researcher as they form new ideas and tentative theories on how concepts relate to one another (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The present research followed this established model, and eventually numerous diagrams emerge which help to effectively show proposed relationships between relevant concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).



with paedophilia because of their adoption of cognitive distortions that rationalise their thoughts and actions (Paquette, Cortoni, Proulx & Longpre, 2014).

**Figure 3.2**



Figure 3.2 shows a diagram that constitutes the researcher’s very first attempt to examine the variances that were being observed in the different types of potential child abusers encountered on the H2CW. It endeavours to separate sadistic paedophiles, non-sadistic paedophiles, sadists who do not have paedophilia, incest offenders, and non-abusing parents according to their levels of sadism and what their “age of attraction” (AOA) is.

The combination of notes and grid breakdown depicted on the next page covers a few topics. The notes concern the link between empathy and the cognitive distortions that many sexual abusers use to rationalise their behaviour. The note argues that if an abuser’s empathy is intact then they must be experiencing cognitive distortions that rationalise the abuse. This is because it is precisely people with empathy who most need this ‘defence mechanism’ to shield them against realising how harmful their actions are, and the consequent shame and guilt that would attend this realisation. It further argues that an individual’s levels of certain characteristics like intelligence, reflexivity, critical thinking, and so on, will -in combination with how extreme the nature of the abuse is- determine whether or not a cognitive distortion



will be maintained by an abuser, or whether it will be discarded. In other words the more extreme the abuse is the more difficult it will be to rationalise. If this is true, then it implies that paedophiles who engage in sadistic abuse are likely to have severely impaired empathy or severely impaired cognitive ability because it seems unlikely that they would be able to maintain cognitive distortions that justify sadistic abuse.

**Figure 3.3**

	Active	Empathy	SAD	PD	Distortions
Opp Sex	✓	?			?
Opp Phys	✓		✓		?
Active PSX	✓	✓		✓	✓
Cons PSX	✓	✓		✓	
Ind PSX	✓			✓	
Act. PSD	✓		✓	✓	
Cons. PSD		✓	✓	✓	

Distortions + Empathy are mutually exclusive.  
 Or at least tend to not co-exist  
 Distortions will be present as  
 defence mechanism, but they are  
 difficult to maintain if reality  
 more obviously incompatible. ⊕  
 → Because empathy breaks distortions

one illusion shattered ability to  
 resist will depend on  
 ① Impulse control  
 ② fear  
 ③ arousal level

⊕ ~~the~~ un maintainability 1:  
 ① extremeness of action (external)  
 ② intelligence → (personal)  
 ③ reflexivity  
 ④ critical voices (social)  
 ⑤ awareness of risk (personal)  
 ⑥ Empathy (personal)  
 ↳ see how it is not with it 26

The grid breakdown in figure 3.3 provides an example of the observed differences in the actual and potential child abusers from the H2CW that comes very close to the final theory. The grid separates potential child physical and sexual abusers into seven categories based on whether they actively engage in sexual abuse, whether they have intact empathy, whether they are sadistic, whether they have paedophilia, and whether cognitive distortions seem to be present. Overall, these notes provide useful insight into the researcher's thought process and procedure as well as providing a rough description of how the two new theories were developed from the data.

### **3.8.4 Reflexivity**

The researcher found the study a difficult one to conduct, emotionally. Many of the accounts from participants were extremely candid, especially on the H2CW – and this meant reading accounts that were purposefully violent. As someone opposed to cruelty of any kind, especially to groups as disempowered as children, this was personally upsetting. Observing people freely offering advice to others to help with ‘grooming’, and so on, was understandably unsettling. Remembering that the data examined constituted many thousands of posts, the study was emotionally taxing. In fact, on a personal note, it was one of several factors that precipitated a depression. Completing the study feels like a healing process, of some kind.

Nonetheless, ideologically the researcher is of the belief that individuals have the right to be seen holistically, and to have even their worst aspects understood. Naturally this ideology may have influenced this study’s outcomes. This researcher believes firmly that the way in which a “monster narrative” is constructed around paedophiles is contrary to Psychological principles including positive regard of the other, and the belief that treatment is possible for almost any psychological ill. Therefore, understanding rather than demonising people who possess the paraphilia seems, to the researcher, to be the psychologically sensible and ethical move to make. This firm belief is much of what enabled the researcher to continue study despite being personally upset by much of the content examined. The opportunity to help people suffering from these paraphilia not only means a compassionate response to them, but a greater likelihood that this work will mean less harm to children in future. Should that prove to be the case, at all, the effort will be well worth it for the researcher.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter attempted to describe the research method and process used in the study. It included explanations of the nature of the corpus of data and the participants, it covered the ethical issues involved in this type of research in depth, it discussed the theoretical paradigm of critical realism, the principles of grounded theoretic research, and the exact process that the researcher engaged in for this study. It concluded with some examples of research process notes that demonstrate how the two new theories emerged from the observed data.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter constitutes a discussion of the key categories that emerged during the coding process first by looking at categories the users of the two websites shared and then at categories that they did not share.

### **4.2 Common Categories of Significance**

Once the coding process had reached saturation, higher order categories that could be used to develop the emerging theory were identified. These categories relate to the attitudes and behaviour of the study's participants. Further, these categories serve to illustrate important differences between participants from PSCW and H2CW. Some of the categories emerged from both websites while others materialised from coding data from primarily one site or the other. Indeed, at times a category that emerged on one site was mirrored by a competing, contradictory category on the other site.

#### **4.2.1 “Non-harm”**

The most important characteristic of the PSCW participants was their support for the notion of non-harm. They repeatedly stated that they would never “harm” a child (PSC8, PSC23, PSC51). For example, PSC70 stated “Of course the golden rule should be be ‘first do no harm’, so whenever the child is ready and not a second before [sic]”. This finding echoes the studies conducted by Winder and Gough (2010), Durkin and Bryant (1999) and O’Halloran and Quayle (2010), all of which found that the theme of behaviour justification based on the justification of non-harm was pervasive. In contrast with the PSCW participants, those encountered on the H2CW defended their actions through victim blaming and other forms of minimising the rights of the children they targeted. This difference reflects the findings of Goode (2009) where participants stated that the paedophile community was sharply divided between those who felt that adult-child sex is not harmful, and those who believe that it is.



What “non-harm” meant for the PSCW participants was complex. Some of the PSCW’s members agreed with the stance of society: that adults should not have sexual contact with children. These individuals called themselves “conservative” paedophiles. These participants appeared to be in the minority and a more common approach was to argue that there are forms of child sexual abuse that are morally right, and others that are morally wrong. For example, PSC19 argued that it is wrong for fathers to abuse their daughters, because their daughters have to be subservient to them and this power dynamic makes true consent impossible. However, he also felt that there is nothing morally wrong with other men engaging in sexual contact with children, in spite of the general power that all adults have over them. Others argued that there is an elaborate series of steps that one can perform in order to introduce sexual contact to a child in a way that is not harmful to them and does not expose the abuser to being discovered (PSC12). This is what is commonly referred to as “grooming” (Babchishin, Hanson & VanZuylen, 2015).

It is worth noting that while some members accepted the use of the term “grooming” (PSC9) others rejected the term and claimed that there is no real difference between an adult’s relationship with another adult and an adult’s relationship with a child. They stated that “it is a relationship, just like any other” (PSC1). At the core of this idea was the thought that there is a correct way to proceed that could enable the paedophile to engage in sexual contact with a child without causing any harm to them. This included an avoidance of any form of force or violence. This principle of non-harm was arguably the most important characteristic by which the PSCW’s participants attempted to define themselves.

#### **4.2.2 “Respecting” and “empowering” children.**

A second argument put forth by the members of the PSCW was that, far from taking advantage of children, they offered children a form of emancipation; one that society denies them. This line of argument held that children are naturally sexual beings, and that society imposes sexual repression onto children by telling them that normal acts of sexual experimentation, e.g. example masturbation are immoral or shameful. PSC69 stated clearly that they believed “some parents address this as just telling their kids that it is ALL bad... even touching yourself is taboo” [sic]. Other participants agreed (PSC9, PSC38). The PSCW’s members continued this line of thought by saying that this sexual repression necessitated that someone “assist” children in discovering their sexuality. Participants furthermore stated that they were not only well

equipped to do so but were actually better equipped than children's age-appropriate peers: "If I felt the need for my daughter to start experimenting sexually I would rather it be by my hand" (PSC47). Through this narrative these paedophiles attempted to invert their role from child abuser to child saviour. Thus, they claimed that they were not imposing harmful attention onto children; rather they were "freeing" children to express their own sexuality.

A key component of this idea of "freedom" was that these participants allowed children to "take the lead" in their encounters. They argued that during their sexual activities with children it was the children who determined what they would or would not do together (PSC20). They stated that this was done in line with the principle of "non-harm" discussed above, but also because they wished to teach children to make empowered choices about their own sexuality (PSC12). They also argued that they showed children a form of respect that other adults do not. They claimed that they respected children's agency, and their right to say no (but also to say yes) to sexual contact: "The adult should also make it clear that any sexual contact should be intrinsically desired by the minor, rather than being just a favor to the adult" [sic] (PSC67). They believed that children can, from a very young age, meaningfully consent to sexual contact with PSC5 saying "we want...children to be allowed to make their own choices".

They also argued that many of the children they encountered preferred spending time with them because they were ignored by their own parents who "frequently neglect" them, and that the children were desperately looking for anyone who "treats them with respect and kindness" (PSC28). The paedophiles claimed to respect the child's need for attention, and the fact that children have a unique view of the world that most adults discount. They claimed that children appreciate this respect and that this is one of the reasons why children find themselves "drawn" to paedophiles. Overall, these paedophiles constructed a version of events in which it is society that is oppressing, and disempowering children and it is they, the paedophiles, who are "empowering" and "valuing" children, and who respect children's "right to choose".

#### **4.2.3 The paedophile as "victim".**

One of the reasons why participants made use of the PSCW was because they felt unfairly targeted by society. They felt that in many ways they were the victims of abusive social practices. In order to understand this one must remember that the members of the PSCW, on the whole, argued that sexual contact between adults and children can be performed in such a

way as to be non-harmful. From their perspective, imposing arrest, prosecution, and social censure upon those who engaged in sexual contact with children all seem “unnecessary”, and “oppressive” (PSC47). These attitudes were also in evidence in the study conducted by Winder and Gough (2010). PSCW participants furthermore noted that society’s condemnation is not limited to child sexual abusers, but at all people with paedophilia. This has led to a circumstance in which these individuals fear being ostracised even if they have never indulged their paraphilia (PSC41), because having the paraphilia is seen as proof of being guilty of child sexual abuse. The participants also argued that the punishments for indulging their paraphilia were far too harsh. They argued that “consensual” sexual contact should not be treated the same way as “violent abuse” or “rape” (PSC8). PSCW’s members drew a strong distinction between their community and its actions, and the actions of “sadistic paedophiles”. The members of the PSCW claimed that it is the sadistic paedophiles who truly abuse, exploit, and traumatise children.

#### **4.2.4 The “conservative” paedophile.**

As mentioned above some of the members of the PSCW dedicated themselves to never engaging in sexual contact with children, because they believed that such contact is immoral, as it may be harmful to the child. These individuals called themselves “conservative” paedophiles. For example, PSC20 stated that “Conservative generally means that the pedophile refrains from engaging in sexual relationships with children”. Conservative paedophiles seemed to constitute a small percentage of the total number of PSCW members. The fact that the sub-forum that was devoted to conservative paedophilia only had around one thousand posts at time of writing (as opposed to the five thousand or so on the “Child Love Support” sub-forum) would seem to bear this out.

On the PSCW much debate had occurred in an attempt to create a loose definition of conservative paedophilia; one participant in particular contributed a detailed description of their understanding of the term; due to its complexity it bears posting in full and then analysing in detail.

According to PSC46, a conservative paedophile is:

“Someone who does not engage in intimate sexual relationships with children for either ethical or moral reasons. ‘Ethical or moral reasons’ may mean direct causation (eg -

Sexual relationships are inherently harmful), or indirect causation (eg - How society's attitudes towards pedophilia alter a child's perception of a relationship). They may engage in platonic relationships with children (ie - No sexual connotations). They may use mitigation methods such as IIOC, regardless of any other definition. They may want sexual relationships to be possible, and would engage in one... if it weren't for the above ethical or moral dilemma [sic]”.

The first thing that one should note is the distinction that was drawn between “direct” harm and “indirect” harm. The notion of direct harm caused by sexual contact between an adult and a child is that which is generally held by society. It is the idea that sexual contact of this type is inherently harmful, and there is nothing that one can do to avert this harm.

The notion of indirect harm, as described in the definition above, is an interesting one and it reflects the way that many paedophiles feel about child sex laws, and the way that society responds to allegations of sexual abuse. The argument was that it is not the sexual contact that causes the harm, this was believed to be benign provided that “consent” was gained and that care was taken to avoid harm. Rather, they believed that psychological harm is caused to the child after the abuse has occurred (PSC46). This harm is inflicted upon the child by their parents, the police, lawyers, medical professionals, and society as a whole. The PSCW’s members claimed that the invasiveness of medical tests to determine if abuse has taken place can be highly traumatising for the child. Further, they argued that testifying in a court case amplifies the harm and causes disruption to the family, as does the media attention that often also forms part of the experience. They contended that the message the child is given that they have suffered a horrible trauma, that they have been taken advantage of, and that they will have emotional scars for the remainder of their life, comprises a self-fulfilling prophecy. In PSC49’s own words the harm can be caused long after the abuse when “everyone freaks the fuck out [sic]”. Thus, they claimed that the stress of society’s response and the stigma imposed on the child might ensure that if they had not been traumatised previously, they certainly would be afterwards (PSC38).

Furthermore, they claimed that this trauma could be inflicted onto the child even if the abuse is never discovered, because the child would still grow up in an environment where they were constantly told that “they are a victim” (PSC67). Lastly, they once again invoked the claim that children can enjoy sexual pleasure provided by an adult, and that telling the child later that the experience “must” have been unpleasant teaches the child that they cannot trust

their own body, or their own sexuality (PSC38). What is clear is that this argument formed part of the normalization discourse that the participants used to rationalise their behaviour. It is also clear that at least some of the conservative paedophiles believed strongly enough in this argument to use it as their rationale for avoiding sexual contact with children. They believed that if they were to engage in sexual activity with a child the sexual activity would be benign, but the response from society as a whole would be so traumatising for the child that engaging in the initial sexual abuse becomes an immoral act (PSC49).

It is also worth noting that, flowing from this understanding of what constitutes conservative paedophilia, these participants did not attempt to completely separate themselves from children; they only sought to keep their interactions with children purely platonic. Indeed, PSC46 argued that an individual cannot call themselves a conservative paedophile if they only abstain from abuse from a lack of access to children: “(they) may consider themselves conservative, but we do not”. PSC46 maintained that the decision to be a conservative paedophile must be a moral one and that conservative paedophiles should be comfortable interacting with children in a non-sexual way. Participants gave a few reasons for this; the first was a practical one. If the paedophile’s family and friends have children, then avoiding contact with these children altogether may seem strange and raise the risk that their paraphilia would be discovered. The second was participants claimed that the love they felt for children was not merely sexual. They stated that they felt both fraternal and paternal love towards children and saw no need to remove children from their lives completely. Indeed, PSC57 argued that attempting to avoid all contact with children “makes me more at risk for acting out, especially in a borderline/non-consensual [sic] manner”. They argued that interacting with children in a platonic way was a coping mechanism that conservative paedophiles can use to satisfy their desire to be around children, without any risk of harm occurring. This idea of there being ways of satisfying their paraphilic urges without sexually abusing children also connects to the participant’s use of IIOC. The self-identified conservative paedophiles use of IIOC as a coping mechanism was so ubiquitous that it was taken for granted.

#### **4.2.5 IIOC**

On the PSCW all participants who commented on IIOC admitted to using it for sexual purposes. In fact, a pervasive belief held by the members of the PSCW was that the possession and use of IIOC is ubiquitous amongst paedophiles (PSC59), and that the only thing that would

stop a paedophile from consuming IIOC is not having access to it. At the time of data gathering IIOC was readily available on TOR and thus, if the participants are to be believed, all of the PSCW's members were regularly accessing it. The issue of the availability of IIOC and how it relates to the desire to keep IIOC on hand, was discussed by one participant who stated that they did not keep a lot of IIOC and that this was primarily because accessing it via TOR was so easy. They stated that by listing the images they most enjoyed as "favourites" on the website "Lolita City" they could have "faster access to see them" and that by not downloading the images they were able to be "safer" (PSC7). In other words, having ready access to IIOC via the darknet meant that they did not need to store it themselves. A few others echoed this sentiment. But it should be noted that even PSC7 admitted to keeping a small amount of IIOC at all times which suggests that even a paedophile who is not in the habit of downloading IIOC for storage still finds it necessary to keep some of it readily available.

At the other end of the scale some of the participants stated that they had amassed extremely large stockpiles of IIOC. Several participants including PSC33 and PSC46 claimed that their collections were measured in the hundreds of gigabytes. PSC46 went as far as to say that they "*only* have around 180GB at the moment" (*italics added*). For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that a single electronic image of photographic quality is approximately 1MB. Given that a GB is 1000MB this would mean that these participants were in possession of hundreds of thousands of pornographic images of photographic quality, or a comparable volume of videos or lower quality images. Given the volumes involved it was not surprising to observe that some members stated that they felt they might be addicted to IIOC. Interestingly, PSC46 said that they spent far more time amassing the collection, updating it, and organising it than they did using it for sexual gratification. To be precise they said that they had "split it between pictures and videos, with each model/studio/producer having their own folder, with subfolders to denote different sets/issues [sic]". PSC20 agreed stating that they devoted "great time and effort" to maintaining their collection and furthermore that they had assumed that this was the norm amongst most paedophiles. This suggests that for some paedophiles a collection of IIOC is not merely a means to a sexual end. It is also an end in itself.

It is also possible that a part of their desire for IIOC stemmed from a need to vicariously indulge in paedophilic behaviour without the risks associated with active sexual abuse of a child. Similarly, the time spent maintaining their collection may also have been a way to satisfy needs that could not be fulfilled through any other means. PSC53 stated that they constantly

searched IIOC websites looking for anything that they did not already have, and that what they desired changed over time depending on what was available. PSC34 stated that their desire to maintain their collection was “borderline compulsive” and that it was “a huge distraction” from their day to day life. This research could be particularly important since it is these individuals who are most likely to be the ones responsible for restocking IIOC websites after they are shut down by law enforcement. According to the members of the PSCW these websites are created and maintained by some of the more technologically-savvy paedophiles. Typically, the website will be created and some IIOC will be posted to attract other paedophiles to the site. These individuals will post more IIOC, which attracts more people to the site, and so on. Everyone who visits the site gains access to IIOC that they did not have before and in return they also post IIOC or offer congratulations and encouragement to those who do. This is of key importance to understanding the mechanism that drives these sites.

Paedophiles are drawn to the sites by their desire for IIOC. But the individuals who upload the IIOC to those sites do not receive any direct benefit. They cannot be paid for their efforts because doing so would expose both the seller and the buyer to identification by law enforcement. According to the members of the PSCW people upload IIOC for two reasons. Firstly, they hope that by doing so they will encourage others to do the same, which may provide them with IIOC that they did not previously have. Secondly, other users of the IIOC websites will often post grateful or congratulatory messages thanking the original uploader for their contribution. This provides a form of social reward (PSC8, PSC46). The advantage for the person who maintains the website is that they receive access to everything that has been posted. This is their reward for the time and money that they are expending on the site.

Some of these sites are freely accessible by everyone on the darknet, others have membership requirements. For the IIOC collector who maintains the site there are advantages and disadvantages to both. In brief, the easier it is to access the site the more popular the site will be and the more IIOC will be posted. However, the more popular the site is the more likely it becomes that it will be overloaded by users and will not be able to remain functional. Additionally, these larger sites are more likely to be shut down by law enforcement or “hacktivists” (PSC62). The actions of law enforcement are also responsible for another facet of the IIOC subculture. Many of the participants stated that their attempts to amass a large collection of IIOC failed because they repeatedly deleted their own collections. PSC20 stated that they would “download and view and then ensure that no trace remains” and PSC46 said that they would build up a collection but then “start thinking more about the impact upon family



and loved ones if my collection is ever discovered”. They would therefore “wipe it all out, rinse and repeat”. Participants like PSC46 stated that they sometimes deleted their collections due to a pervasive paranoia about being discovered by law enforcement. PSC46 stated that they used overlapping “layers of solid encryption” on their collection so that even if law enforcement agents confiscated the collection it would most likely take them years to gain full access to it.

These security precautions, however, did not free these individuals from their fear of being uncovered. The participants thus appeared to exist in a state of tension in relation to IIOC. On the one hand they have a need to have access to IIOC to satisfy their urges in a way that is less harmful and has lower risks of arrest than engaging in child sexual abuse. Conversely, they also feel the need to control their desire for IIOC in order to reduce the risk of legal ramifications if they are discovered.

The PSCW participants’ use of IIOC was related to the core category “it’s not about sexual abuse” because of the argument many of the participants made that using IIOC was a way, indeed the only way, for them to satisfy their sexual urges without putting themselves or someone else in danger. The conservative paedophiles like PSC46 argued that using IIOC is a lesser evil and that it prevents sexual abuse. These attitudes and beliefs were also evident in the studies conducted by Goode (2009) and Meridian et al. (2014). One member of the PSCW, PSC62 even argued that viewing sadistic IIOC could be justified for the same reasons. They made the argument that creating sadistic IIOC is morally wrong but that once it has been made the harm has been committed and further use of the IIOC is not immoral because it may prevent abuse. So, once again the core category explains an important part of the behaviour that has been observed.

There was much debate on the PSCW about which forms of IIOC can be ethically used for masturbation. In general, the members felt any IIOC that clearly shows children who are in pain or distress, the so-called hurtcore IIOC, is unethical. Some members, like PSC8, went so far as to say that anyone who enjoyed hurtcore IIOC “doesn’t deserve to be called a paedophile” and were instead something quite different. In contrast using IIOC that involves children who are nude but not engaged in any sexual acts; or IIOC in which children are engaged in sexual acts, but appear to be enjoying themselves, was generally accepted by the participants. For the conservative paedophiles the justification was simple: they believed that they could use this IIOC to satisfy their sexual urges, and thus avoid acting on them with an actual child.



PSC32 took this argument even further. They argued that even if the creation of the IIOC was itself an immoral act, because it violated the rights of the child, the later use of that IIOC is not immoral because the IIOC has already been created (i.e. the harm has already occurred). Further using the IIOC for masturbation meant that the paedophile is less likely to cause further abuse to other children. Thus, PSC32 claimed that using IIOC for masturbatory purposes represented a net gain, in the moral sense, or as they put it “the creation may be horrible, but having it is not”.

Indeed, this argument was also extended by another member to even include hurtcore IIOC. Respondent PSC62 was also respondent H2C62. They confirmed that they were active on both the PSCW and H2CW, and a sadistic paedophile. However, they are also a conservative paedophile who was committed to not acting on their paraphilic desires, particularly the sadistic ones. PSC62 stated that they used hurtcore IIOC to satisfy their sadistic paedophilic desires. That while they would never make hurtcore themselves, and that the making of any hurtcore is immoral, the later use of hurtcore for masturbation is justified, because any harm has already occurred, and masturbation provided a safe outlet for their urges. Of course, there remains the question of how the depicted child in hurtcore or IIOC may be re-traumatised by the fact that a record of their violation will persist in perpetuity across the darknet. This was typically either ignored or considered less important than the need for an outlet for their sexual urges, both amongst conservative and active paedophiles.

#### **4.2.6 The “Waxing and waning” of sexual interest in children**

Some of the members of the PSCW stated that their interest in certain types of IIOC waxed and waned over time. “Type” in this sense can relate to several different factors. It may refer to the “hardness” of the IIOC in terms of whether it only featured nudity or included sexual acts themselves. Type may also refer to different sexual acts being performed within the IIOC, or to the age of the children depicted in the IIOC (PSC8). In one example PSC53 stated that they seemed to always want to find whichever form of IIOC was available the least, and that any IIOC that they obtained gradually lost its appeal. They would have an interest in a certain type of IIOC then that IIOC would lose its appeal and other forms would become more desirable. Later those forms would become less arousing as well and they would move on to yet another form. Ultimately, this process would lead to them returning to the type of IIOC that

they had originally lost interest in. This process thus led to their interest in different types of IIOC waxing and waning over time.

There is a related question about the sexual desires of paedophiles: does their age of attraction change over time? Some of the participants from the PSCW agreed, while the experience of others was more complex. PSC54 stated that the age of the children they were aroused by had indeed steadily lowered over time. They had initially been “sexually attracted to teens and then 12 year olds” and that at the time of their posting they were finding children as young as 5 to be arousing. PSC63 argued that this was part of a process whereby paedophiles become more comfortable with their desires and gained a “willingness to break the norms that society pounds into our heads”. PSC28 on the other hand stated that initially their age of attraction had “dropped a little over the years” but that on average it had actually gone up. To be precise they stated that initially they were attracted to younger and younger girls until they fixated specifically on pre-pubescent girls, but that after a few years they found themselves attracted to girls around the age of puberty or just above it. PSC7 stated that their age of attraction had varied from 4 years of age to 16 years of age and back again. This also appears to indicate a fluctuation in paedophiles’ sexual interests. In contrast, PSC9 stated that their age of attraction was wide saying “my loli AoA is 2-12 [sic]”, but that their minimum age of attraction had also slowly lowered over time.

#### **4.2.7 Enabling child sexual abuse**

There were a variety of opinions about paedophilia, IIOC, and CSA on the PSCW and many of these opinions were self-serving. Participants provided rationalisations for the sexual abuse of children, the manipulation of their parents, and both the creation and use of IIOC. The dominant belief on the site was that it was possible for an adult to engage in sexual contact with a child without risk for the adult or the child. This belief, and the rationalisations that underlie it, could have served to encourage members to engage in acts of sexual abuse. Paquette, Cortoni, Proulx and Longpre (2014) found that this is indeed the case, because cognitive distortions help convince paedophiles that sexual contact between adults and children is unproblematic, making it more likely that the individual will act upon rather than merely entertain the impulse (Paquette, Cortoni, Proulx & Longpre, 2014).

Quayle and Taylor (2003) present a useful model of pathological Internet use. It contains too much of value to be discussed in depth here but the process it explains, by which individuals with paedophilia can have their desires enabled by a website, accurately describes the way in which the members of the PSCW encouraged acts of child sexual abuse. Individuals with paedophilia feel badly treated and wrongfully stigmatised by society. For this reason, they seek out online communities that offer acceptance, comradery, and emotional support. The anonymity that the Internet offers and the ways in which online communication serves to disinhibit people are also probable sources of encouragement. Individuals who discover the darknet will then have access to IIOC, which some paedophiles use to desensitise children to the idea of sexual contact with adults. It is entirely possible that IIOC may have the same effect on a paedophile. A paedophile who is repeatedly exposed to images and videos of adults engaging in acts of sexual abuse with children may come to believe that there is nothing wrong with behaving in this way. This may in turn reduce their anxiety about being a paedophile, using IIOC, and wishing to sexually abuse a child.

According to Quayle and Taylor's model, individuals can also become increasingly reliant on their online support system, and may begin to neglect their social relationships in real life (IRL), i.e. in the offline world. Indeed, PSC43 stated that they would not be able to cope without the emotional support they received on the site from members like PSC4 and PSC61. In one particularly telling thread PSC11 came close to making the decision to end their own life, but the board's members convinced them not to, and a month later their emotional state had much improved. PSC11 stated that the other board members "have no idea how much comfort (they) and the rest of this community have provided".

This sincere emotional support, made freely available, in the absence of any other support being accessible, is clearly highly valued by the PSCW's members, and for obvious reasons. But difficulties can arise if an inactive paedophile's online friends are made up of active paedophiles. They may then begin to influence the individual and encourage them to 'give in' and act on their urges if given the opportunity. The community can also provide them with a detailed list of steps to go through to identify, groom, and abuse a child without being exposed. As a final step they may even encourage them to photograph or video the abuse and thus add to the supply of IIOC on the darknet. This process seemed to be taking place on the PSCW, albeit in a highly disorganised and chaotic way. An example that serves to illustrate the process occurred when PSC55 began a thread in which she stated that she was a teenage girl who was attracted to her 10 year old sister. PSC66 proceeded to coach her through which

precise steps to perform to move from a familial, platonic relationship into an incestuous, sexual one. Over twenty other PSCW members also offered their support of her desires, normalised her behaviour, and reassured her that there was nothing wrong in what she was doing. PSC55 stated explicitly that she “never woulda [sic] had the guts to do anything without all ur [sic] support”. In other threads PSC7, PSC8, PSC18, PSC26, PSC46, PSC53, PSC54, PSC62 and several others all actively encouraged the site’s members to engage in child sexual abuse, with only a handful of conservative paedophiles like PSC12 dissenting. It does bear noting that individuals who came to the PSCW seeking guidance would also have encountered the conservative paedophiles. If they did then they may have found the emotional support that they needed but be discouraged from engaging in acts of sexual abuse. Unfortunately, the conservative paedophiles appeared to be in the minority, thus most of the influence new members were exposed to encouraged abuse, rather than discouraged it.

#### **4.2.8 Relationships.**

This seemed to be one of the most important themes on the PSCW and the word “relationship” was one that was often chosen by the PSCW’s members to describe their sexual interactions with children, e.g. PSC1 stated that “it is a relationship, just like any other”. This finding echoes the results of the study conducted by Naude (2005). However, the discussions that took place covered not only relationships with children but also those with friends, family, and adult romantic partners. The PSCW’s participants often spoke about how isolated they felt and about how difficult it was for them to feel as if they had really connected with others, since they had to keep an important part of their identity secret. They spoke about how this impacted on their relationships with family, friends, and romantic partners. One example was PSC2 who said that due to being identified as a paedophile they had been disowned by their family and had “lost every friend (they) had ever known”. For the PSCW’s members these more conventional relationships were apparently of great importance to them.

In addition to all of the discussion about sexual contact with children, many of the PSCW’s members stated that sexual contact was actually not the main goal of their interactions with children. Many of them said that the goal was rather to begin a “relationship” with the child (PSC9, PSC46, PSC53). However, the PSCW’s members also talked about how relationships with others could be used to provide them with access to children. One member stated that they had endeavoured to develop a reputation as a reliable person who could look after children for

their neighbours. As a result, they were now considered “the local babysitter” (PSC3). PSC51 advised others to ensure that the child’s parents regard them as a “trusted person”. Participants reported that over time they would grow closer to the child by taking them on excursions or attending parties with the child’s family. In this way, conventional relationships were considered valuable in their own right, but they could also provide the potential means of indulging their sexual interest in children, and both aspects appeared to be important.

In contrast the H2CW’s members rarely mentioned relationships except to discuss ways in which the relationship could be exploited. H2C24’s statement about another member’s daughter that “she’s your property and you’re using her as you like” seemed to sum up how many of them viewed family members. H2C35’s bald statement “I’m going to rape my sister” was another illustration. H2CW’s members seemed to see the people with whom they interacted merely as resources to be exploited. The most common examples were the various ways in which they could obtain satisfaction from hurting children, or how adults with whom they had a relationship could be used to facilitate access to a child. H2C6 went as far as to question whether it was worthwhile to start a relationship with a woman for the sole purpose of accessing her child. Thus, it appeared as if the members of the H2CW tended to value their relationships more as a means to an end than an end in its own right. It should be noted however, that the H2CW only existed for a few months, whereas the PSCW had been active, despite multiple shut downs, for several years. It is possible that since the members of the H2CW had not had sufficient time to form a community and make friends with other members they were simply being more guarded about their family lives. This may seem unlikely since they were completely open about their sadistic desires but given that the H2CW was the only place that these members had to discuss their violent urges it makes sense that their conversations would focus on this aspect of their lives to the exclusion of others.

Members of both websites viewed their relationships with others as a source of danger. Specifically, they felt that becoming too emotionally close to other people might lead to their nature as paedophiles becoming exposed with PSC43 warning members not to open up emotionally to other people because doing so gives them “powerful control of your future”. For this reason, many of the participants mentioned feeling isolated from other people.

#### **4.2.9 Goals and satisfaction.**

This category relates to what the members of the two sites desired from their interactions with children, and what form the satisfaction they sought took. Members of the PSCW discussed getting enjoyment from a variety of interactions with children. These included benign activities like “getting ice cream” (PSC5), non-sexual physical affection (PSC8), playing games, and other typical activities (PSC50). It also included appreciating the perceived physical beauty of children. For example, PSC6 enjoyed seeing boys in swimming costumes and PSC7 liked girls with pale, unblemished skin. As is to be expected members of PSCW also spent time discussing the various forms of sexual abuse that they either engaged in or fantasized about engaging in. Thus, the forms of satisfaction that PSCW’s members desired included both sexual and platonic components.

In contrast the goals discussed on by H2CW’s members were quite different. They revolved almost entirely around sex or sadism. Over 90% of coded segments in which satisfaction or desire were mentioned on the H2CW were directly related to sexual or sadistic activity of some kind, and around 20% of the mentions of desire or satisfaction on the H2CW involved an unambiguously sadistic component. Members discussed how aroused they became at the thought of rape (H2C26) and that crying was highly erotic for them with H2C59 saying “I love when they lay there passive balling their eyes out [sic]”. Often the sadism described was not sexual at all but entirely violent. H2C33 stated that they wanted to find a girl in school uniform and physically assault them. Similarly, H2C34 stated that striking their victims was something that they found highly enjoyable particularly “if (they’d) had a bad day”. Additionally, while the members’ sadistic acts were primarily physical or sexual, they could also involve emotional and psychological components. H2C36 went so far as to say that the “mental torment of a child” who was anticipating a violent assault was “at least as potent” in terms of satisfaction as the violent acts themselves. H2C10 concurred and spoke specifically about provoking guilt as a source of satisfaction by making a child feel that “it’s their fault and only theirs”. In another example H2C63 stated that they derived satisfaction from creating rules for a child that were ambiguous or contradictory and thus could not be followed. This provided them with the excuse that they needed to punish the child and in so doing gain the satisfaction they craved. Thus, it can be said that the gratification sought by the members of the H2CW was almost entirely oriented around sexual acts, and all manner of sadistic abuse.

#### **4.2.10 Interference.**

This category relates to how participants perceived things that stood in the way of their goals and satisfaction, or that placed them in danger of being exposed. The most common problems related to the fear of being identified as a paedophile, arrested, prosecuted, and jailed for a sexual offence. When PSC11 discovered that they were being investigated for sexual abuse they summarised their feelings by saying “my life is over” and other members stated that in PSC11’s shoes they would most likely feel the same. On the H2CW this was the fear that was most often discussed with roughly 80% of the occurrences of this category being related to concerns about the negative consequences of being discovered. H2C64 stated that this was the reason why they did not act on their sexual desires because the possibility of ending up in prison was “not worth the risk”. H2C39 advised another member that in order to escape the consequences of their actions they should make sure to drug their victim and ensure that “no one sees you and her together”.

In contrast, while the participants on the PSCW did discuss the issue of potential legal action against them they also discussed the fear they felt of being rejected by loved ones if they were to be discovered (PSC13). Similarly, PSC12 reversed this idea and spoke about how difficult it would be for one’s children to lose a parent to prison saying “the thought of your kids losing (a parent)...will simply kill them”. Thus, the members of the PSCW were concerned not only with their own wellbeing, but also with the wellbeing of others, even though they did not necessarily extend this concern to their potential victims.

An often discussed “problem” on both sites was the possibility that a child they were attempting to abuse would expose them in some way. They discussed how “problematic” (PSC3) it could be when a child had a close and open relationship with their parents and siblings, because this increased the odds that they might mention to a family member that something was happening that they were not comfortable with. Consequently, one of the “dangers” that participants faced was that a victim might have a healthy relationship with “one or other friend or relative” (H2C38), who might discover that the abuse was taking place.



#### **4.2.11 Real and imagined sex.**

This category combined several codes that all related to sex in one way or another. These included particular sexual acts that the participants engaged in, fantasized about engaging in, or enjoyed vicariously via IIOC. As mentioned above roughly 24% of mentions of desire or satisfaction on the PSCW had to do with non-sexual activities with the remaining 76% being explicitly sexual. Manually stimulating the genitals (PSC1) and oral sex (PSC10) seemed to be more commonly described than penetrative sexual acts, however these were in evidence and involved both coitus and anal penetration (PSC9). Participants from both websites devoted considerable time to discussing their sexual desires and both groups deliberately blurred the line between fantasy and reality (H2C42).

This seemed to have been done for three reasons. Firstly, it made accounts of their supposed exploits more interesting and arousing for other members. Secondly, fantasy and reality were blurred in the accounts of sexual acts in order to make any identifying details more obscure. This served to protect the identity of those members who actually were describing real events. Lastly, by mixing true events with fictional ones the authors increased the likelihood that they could maintain plausible deniability if they were ever caught. For example, if their identity was ever uncovered and they came to be interrogated by the police they could claim that the entire tale was merely fiction and was not evidence of any wrongdoing in the offline world.

The coding process made it clear that members of the two site's accounts of real and imagined sexual activity tended to be rather different. Firstly, many of the accounts of the participants from the PSCW involved a child experiencing sexual pleasure (around 9% of coded segments). One member spoke specifically about how the child's "enjoyment" was more important than their own advising another member, who was trying to initiate sexual contact with a child, to "ask her what feels best for her" (PSC54). Indeed, a few of these accounts, notably from PSC55, involved the child experiencing sexual pleasure and the paedophile refraining from doing so for fear of causing emotional or physical harm to the child, or the paedophile refraining from any form of sexual contact with a child whatsoever due to that same fear. In one case PSC52 stated that they had decided not to attempt to sexually abuse any children because their non-sexual relationships with the children were too important to risk losing them. They stated that the non-sexual relationships "(gives) me far greater joy than I



think molesting one would”. From the coded segments it would appear at first glance that putting the desires of the child foremost was considered very important to the PSCW members and that platonic interactions with children were also very important to them.

In contrast, descriptions of child enjoyment were almost entirely absent in the accounts of sexual activity provided by the members of the H2CW. Discussions of the topic occurred in only 1% of coded segments and those occasions were typically examples of victim blaming. In those cases, the implication was made that the child victim somehow enjoyed the pain they were experiencing, and further that in some way this justified the torture itself. For example, H2C40 referred to victims as “sluts” in order to imply that they enjoyed the abuse that was inflicted on them. In all other cases the experience of the child victim was either described in obviously negative terms (i.e. details were given that made it clear the victim was experiencing some form of suffering) or else the experience of the child was entirely ignored and they were treated merely as an object to be taken advantage of. Indeed, objectifying language occurred in over 10% of the coded segments on the H2CW, making it one of the most common codes for the data from that website. Examples include H2C1 referring to victims as “fuck toys” and H2C17 desiring to eat food off of a young girl or use her as a “footrest” and thus reduce her to the status of a literal object. This fixation on the pain, humiliation, and discomfort of their victims links closely to the next category.

#### **4.2.12 Hurt children.**

This category included references to both sadism and “hurtcore”: the term given for sadistic IIOC, a visual record of the sexual torture of children. Discussing the creation, collection, storage, distribution, and enjoyment of this form of IIOC was the stated purpose of the H2CW. Members of both the PSCW and the H2CW discussed this form of IIOC but, as one might expect, the H2CW’s members mentioned it far more often, roughly 10% of coded segments compared with only about 3% on the PSCW. In addition, members of the two sites viewed the topic differently. The PSCW’s members spoke most often of how they despised hurtcore and those who make it. PSC8 stated that paedophilia was supposed to mean “the love of children” not their abuse and PSC18 implied that anyone who was aroused by hurtcore must have a mental illness such as “psychopathy”. However, there were also some members on the PSCW who disclosed that they did find hurtcore arousing but unlike the members of the H2CW they further stated that they were disgusted with themselves for feeling that way. PSC17 stated they

felt “filthy and vile for being turned on by it”. These few exceptional cases will be explored in more detail in a later section.

The most important characteristic of the PSCW participants was their espousal of the idea of non-harm. These participants repeatedly stated that they would never “harm” a child (PSC8, PSC23, PSC51). However, what this meant for them in practice was complex. Some of the PSCW’s members agreed with the stance of society: that adults should not have sexual contact with children. These individuals called themselves “conservative paedophiles”. However, they appeared to be in the minority and a more common approach was to argue that there are forms of CSA that are morally right, and others that are morally wrong. For example, PSC19 argued that it is wrong for fathers to abuse their daughters, because their daughters have to be subservient to them and this power dynamic makes true consent impossible. However, he also felt that there is nothing morally wrong with other men engaging in sexual contact with children, in spite of the general power that all adults have over them. Others argued that there is an elaborate series of steps that one can perform in order to introduce sexual contact to a child in a way that is not harmful to them and does not expose the abuser to being discovered (PSC12). This is what is commonly referred to as “grooming” (Babchishin, Hanson & VanZuylen, 2015). It is worth noting that while some PSCW members accepted the use of the term “grooming” (PSC9) others rejected the term and claimed that there is no real difference between an adult’s relationship with another adult and an adult’s relationship with a child. They stated that “it is a relationship, just like any other” (PSC1).

When the H2CW’s members discussed hurtcore it was most often to discuss how much they enjoyed it. The members described wishing to copy the multiple acts of violence they saw depicted in hurtcore from casually insulting their target (H2C34) all the way to the rape, torture, and even possible murder of their victims (H2C39). Furthermore, many types of hurtcore were posted on the H2CW itself and many of the discussion threads revolved around comparing and contrasting the various hurtcore materials that the site hosted. Any disapproval of the material that was posted was typically not due to any moral consideration but rather due to it being insufficient for their needs. In fact, members of the H2CW spoke in scornful tones about those who disapproved of hurtcore and described them as being weak or un-masculine with members such as H2C1 referring to them as “cry babies [sic]”. In one instance, participant H2C25 complained that most hurtcore did not show enough pain on the part of the child, or did not show it clearly enough, and they criticised most IIOC because it is made to appear as if the child is enjoying themselves. They stated that what they truly desired was “pics with girls in

pain or vids with screaming sound [sic]”. This statement was supported by several other posters in the discussion thread. The H2CW’s members also frequently demanded that other members create and upload new hurtcore for their enjoyment or relate tales of their exploits as a substitute. On the PSCW such demands for IIOC of any kind were not often made, but that might have been because it was against the rules of the site to do so. It is important to note that for some H2CW’s members the appeal of hurtcore extended beyond the realms of the physical and sexual, into the emotional and psychological. For instance, several H2CW members discussed methods of inflicting forms of mental pain on others for their own enjoyment. It thus seems reasonable to conclude that a number of participants do not display a combination of sadistic and the sexual tendencies, but instead are wholly sadistic in nature.

#### **4.2.13 Supporting.**

This category relates to the providing of emotional support by the sites’ members, for other site members. Goode also found that many of her study’s participants also valued and relied on other paedophile’s emotional support (2009). On the PSCW focus was given to providing emotional support for members regardless of their behaviour. Indeed, the site had an entire sub-forum devoted to “Personal Support” and at time of data gathering it contained over five thousand posts. In one example PSC19 expressed his “deepest sympathies” for a member who was likely to be arrested shortly and there were multiple other threads devoted to the means of coping with “self-doubt and alienation” (PSC63), “depression” (PSC53), and feeling “suicidal” (PSC11). Further PSC73 stated that:

“...I would very much like to talk to people about my feelings, but even doing that IRL is extremely dangerous, since rule #1 of being a pedophile is "trust no one." Here, and in Torchat, I have the opportunity to do that in a completely anonymous setting, even safely pic trading with people. I hope you take the opportunity to do that like I've done, and hopefully it will give you an outlet for your frustration [sic]”.

Further, PSC74 stated that:

“yes I agree this site has been a great help its nice to talk about it and get it off my chest. For the time being i have stopped lucking for love and am coming to terms with myself. I know and enjoy what I am. This is a big thing for me. So thanks to all for the warm welcome [sic].”

This culture of support impacted on the site's members in a few different ways. Firstly, it meant that members were more likely to accept the fact that other members were engaged in sexually abusive relationships with children, even if they did not endorse such behaviour themselves. Secondly, it meant that the members were less likely to criticise those board members who believed that sexual contact between children and adults is always harmful: the self-named "conservative paedophiles". As a result, interactions between the two groups remained cordial with PSC21 joking that the conservatives clearly possessed more "will power" than they did. Similarly, the PSCW's members even responded in supportive fashion to those members who expressed a guilty interest in hurtcore with members like PSC28 apologising to PSC29 for previously saying insensitive things about such individuals.

The type of support offered is of interest though. The PSCW's members tended to accept what the individual was saying, but then attempted to enforce their beliefs that avoiding unambiguous harm to a child is of absolute importance. Most members of the PSCW attempted to convince others that sexual contact between adults and children can be non-harmful and that contact that they considered to be harmful should be avoided at all costs. PSC29 stated that one cannot control what one is sexually aroused by, but that one has a duty to avoid acting on urges that harm others. This position seemed to be fairly typical amongst PSCW members. Conservative PSCW members supported each other in not sexually abusing children at all. The emotional support was in one sense inclusive and non-judgement but in another was contingent upon acceptance of the site's central values.

The members of the H2CW approached emotional support in a different way. As a general rule, users were supported if they argued in favour of the sadistic abuse of children but were attacked and disparaged if they did not. Members congratulated one another on their exploits and commended one another for taking pride in the sadistic IIOC that they shared; they attempted to encourage each other to violently abuse children. One example of this occurred when H2C24 went as far as to tell another member that violently abusing their child was morally right simply because they had the power to do so stating unambiguously: "she's nothing but an abuse toy for your pleasure, and you are doing the right thing by hurting her". Those members who expressed a dislike of violence, or who criticised other members for their abusive activities, were sometimes ignored. But more frequently they came under attack with H2C9, for example, saying that they were "just weak and in denial about how evil they also are".

#### **4.2.14 Procurement vs. force and fantasy.**

The category “Procurement” covered discussions of ways to gain access to children, ways of crossing the boundaries that normally prevent adults from performing sexual acts with children, and the ways of manipulating children into doing what the paedophile wanted them to do. The members of the PSCW spent considerable time discussing how to change a platonic friendship with a child into a situation in which sexual abuse could occur (over 10% of coded segments across the three codes “manipulation”, “boundaries” and “access”). These included various means by which access to children could be obtained and ways to test the boundaries between the platonic and the sexual without the alarm being raised, and so on.

For example, one method of crossing the boundary between platonic touch and sexual touch that was mentioned by PSC7 who asked a younger girl to “sit on (their) lap while (they) tickled her”. They stated that once the girl agreed and became used to their touch, they were able to rapidly progress to disrobing her and then sexually abusing her. Similar issues that were discussed included methods for manipulating a child into doing whatever the paedophile desired. For example, PSC3 stated that they wished to give a young girl physical pleasure in hopes that she might reciprocate later on. This manipulation often took the form of emotional control where the child’s feelings were used to illicit greater access to the child or to facilitate the participant touching them inappropriately. For example, PSC14 encouraged another member to develop an emotional bond with a child before moving on to sexual contact. They advised that the child should be encouraged to view the paedophile as a friend or confidant and as someone who could provide the affection and emotional support that the child’s parents failed to provide. Many of the sites’ members reported targeted children whose parents allegedly failed provide the them with as much attention or affection as the child wanted.

The members of the H2CW differed considerably in their means of procurement. They tended to focus primarily on the use of force and hence the “force and fantasy” category. There was very little discussion on the H2CW about planning their assaults or of which methods to use to obtain what they desired, other than simple force. While this was not always the case (for example H2C9 spoke of how he could use his daughter’s need to please him as a way of “controlling her”) it did seem to be a noticeable trend. The H2CW participants appeared to be obsessed with the “what” and did not give much thought to the “how”. Those plans that were discussed tended to be highly simplistic. Brute force, abduction, and the use of sedatives to

render a victim helpless seemed to be the favoured options. When a member raised the question of what a victim might do after the abuse ended, H2C39 argued simplistically that one must “make sure that no one sees you and her together” and that failing this the simplest solution would be to murder the victim. The discussions also seemed unrealistic. How one might obtain a powerful sedative to use to drug a victim was not discussed. Member H2C38, simply told the other members to make use of these; how one could dispose of evidence was not discussed either and so on.

Other proposed methods of gaining access to a child seemed absurd. One member argued that one could marry a single mother in order to gain access to her children, and that one should be honest about one’s intentions. They made the assertion that one should “simply tell her you are not attracted to her and that your relationship would be a tool for realizing your dream of having sex with your own children” (H2C8). The highly unrealistic nature of this scheme passed almost unchallenged. Equally unlikely was the claim that H2C44 made that it was possible to continue the violent abuse of a child for such a long period of time that the victim would start to “enjoy it”. H2C65 made a similar claim, that while “sometimes things get a little out of control” their victims “alawys enjoy themselves [sic]”. These unrealistic ideas may be further examples of the confusing of the line between fantasy and reality for H2CW members. However, it may also be that the unlikelihood of the sites’ members ever being able to act on their most extreme urges forced them to fixate on fantasy, because their fantasies were all that they had.

#### **4.2.15 Sexualising children vs. sexual subjugation.**

The participants on the PSCW spent a large amount of time discussing the various aspects of children that they found physically appealing or sexually arousing. Indeed, discussions of this nature constituted one of the most common categories with around 9% of coded segments containing utterances on this topic, and there seemed to be a fair range of things that were perceived to be attractive. Most of them related to aspects that one might consider typical of childhood like “braces”, “glasses”, “school uniforms” and so on (PSC22). However, some seemed paradoxical. One member had a paedophilic attraction to young girls who dressed and acted like older women. As they put it, “dressed sexy and with painted finger and toe nails [sic]” (PSC54). And while some members concurred with this description other members explicitly stated that they disliked it when girls tried to appear older. PSC23 said that seeing

girls who dress “like they are older really repulses (them)”. Desired sexual acts also formed part of these conversations with over 6% of coded segments relating to them. These acts involved the touching of erogenous zones, digital penetration, masturbation, oral sex, and penetrative sex.

In contrast on the H2CW discussions of attractive characteristics were less common and discussions about sex, power, and sadism predominated. The members attitudes towards sex was largely summarised by H2C15 who said, “nature is live or die, eat or be eaten, predator and prey”. The three codes that related to these aspects of the various conversations were combined into a single category, “sexual subjugation”. This category was found to occur in 18% of coded segments making it one of the most common categories. The focus on sexual acts and sadism can also be seen when one compares the code “Desire and Satisfaction” across the two boards. On the PSCW roughly 75% of the occurrences of this code related to desired sexual acts with the remaining 25% relating to non-sexual acts. In contrast on the H2CW around 77% related to sexual acts and the remaining 23% related not to platonic contact but rather to violent and sadistic acts.

On the H2CW, descriptions of non-sexual, non-violent interactions with children did not occur within the segments that related to these codes. They did not appear to be desired activities, and they did not appear to provide any satisfaction to the members of the H2CW. Their interest in children seemed to only be either sadistic, or both sadistic and sexual. This attitude was typified by members like respondent H2C24 who said that they had seen a girl with a pretty smile but that they would “rather see her in tears”. Sex and sadism appeared to be the only things that attracted the H2CW’s members interest. Correspondingly, the possibility that their child victims might be “sexual beings” was rarely discussed. The predominant feeling was that children were merely victims to be exploited. Once again this was in contrast to the members of the PSCW who believed that all children are actively sexual people who can consent to all manner of sexual activity.

#### **4.2.16 Constrained vs. incorrigible.**

On the PSCW the members devoted some time to the discussion of “boundaries” (around 5% of coded segments). These are the places where society draws a line between accepted, platonic contact between adults and children, and unacceptable sexual contact. Their discussions of



boundaries fell into two broad categories. The first were discussions about the maintenance of boundaries. Specifically, PSC14 spoke about the importance of remaining firm on established boundaries so as not to frighten or traumatise a child. They told another member that a girl they were pursuing “already has some well-defined boundries [sic] for where she's comfortable being touched, which I would strongly advise you fully respect”. The central theme of these discussions was that respecting established boundaries was important, to protect the child from trauma and the participant from exposure.

In contrast the other type of discussion on boundaries related to how these boundaries could be pushed, in a sufficiently slow and unthreatening way so as to facilitate sexual abuse. In fact, PSC14 directly contradicted their previous statement by also providing advice on how to disguise sexual touching as platonic touching. Indeed, the members of the PSCW discussed a manual called “The Mule’s Guide” which laid out a step-by-step process that could be used to gradually acclimatise a child to non-platonic touch and lead ultimately to penetrative sexual abuse. While these two patterns of discussion may seem to have been in contradiction to one another they were actually part of the same issue. The paedophiles on the PSCW (with the exception of the conservative paedophiles) believed that sexual contact between adults and children could be performed in a non-harmful way, but only if certain rules were followed. A key component of these rules was the idea that any progress in violating socially-accepted boundaries must be done slowly so as not to alarm or harm the child.

Belief in this approach served various functions. It was intended to reduce the likelihood that a child could become frightened or uncomfortable and then seek to avoid the participant in the future or report the abuse to a parent or other authority figure. Adopting this belief also allowed the participants to rationalise their behaviour by convincing themselves that it was the child who was in charge of the interaction. PSC5 explicitly stated that it was a girl who began a particular sexual encounter by grabbing hold of his penis and “stroking it in a masturbatory fashion”. This carried the implication that her behaviour freed the paedophile from any responsibility. In the same way, the statement by PSC46 that “you need to make sure she knows that she is in control” was intended to free the paedophile from the responsibility that they had as an adult, by reassuring them that the child was the one with the power. In any event, the implication was that in order to continue the abuse the paedophiles were compelled to move slowly and incrementally. Consequently, they were subject to three forms of boundaries: those imposed by society, those they imposed upon themselves in an effort to make



the abuse more successful, and those imposed on them by their victims' attempts to resist their advances.

In contrast on the H2CW discussions of boundaries were almost entirely absent (less than 1% of coded segments). It is unclear whether this was because the members did not care about boundaries or because it was taken for granted that their actions were always inherently outside of what is socially acceptable. They seemed to perceive their desires as "incurable" in the sense that they could not be constrained by any rules. H2C45 put it succinctly when they said "No Limits, No Morals! Kidnap, Beat, Rape, Torture [sic]". The discussions about how to commit the abuse that the H2CW's members favour tended to be brief and simplistic. When H2C49 was describing what they would like to do to a child their plan consisted of simply grabbing a child, drugging them, and tying them up. Discussions of how to achieve each step in that process were not entertained. There was nothing like the formalised, incremental approaches favoured by the PSCW's members.

The possibility should be considered that this is because everything, or almost everything, that was discussed on the H2CW was merely fantasy. At this point, however, a useful distinction needs to be made. The scenes described in a fantasy may be entirely fictional, and the author's claims that the events took place may be false. However, the content of the fantasy might very well be a genuine description of what the author wishes was true. It is thus an authentic window into the desires of the group that enjoys those fantasies. Be that as it may, many of the suggestions the H2CW members made seemed incredible and claims that the members made about their exploits seemed equally unlikely; and likely formed part of a fantasy. H2C9 stated openly that he was guilty not only of "watching children being degraded and broken" in hurtcore IIOC but also of "doing it to them" in the real world. H2C42 claimed to have had coital intercourse with multiple young children but did not provide any details about how any of this was achieved, or how they avoided being caught. Sadly, H2C34's claims about physically abusing her daughter seemed far more plausible. But her responses were the exception rather than the rule. When discussions did turn to more realistic concerns members were forced to admit that they were unlikely to ever be able to act on their fantasies. H2C41 stated that they would have sex with a child but only if "it's safe enough". H2C38 stated that while they enjoyed indulging in fantasy they would never act on their urges because "the odds that all the people concerned could keep their mouth shut is highly improbable [sic]". Thus, it seems that while the members of the H2CW might have liked to portray themselves as being unconstrained by any rules, the reality of the situation was quite different. Given that they

acknowledged this fact, albeit grudgingly, it seems likely that practical considerations were kept out of their fantasies because their fantasies could not survive contact with the real world.

The members of the PSCW could posit scenarios in which they were able to sexually abuse children and get away with it and these scenarios were believable (if immoral). But the members of the H2CW had to face the reality that there were no plausible scenarios in which they could indulge their extreme desires without being exposed. Furthermore, it appears as if, for many of the site's members, this was the only reason why they had kept their desires in check. H2C39 summarised this fact by saying "I always think of the possible consequences. The only reason I haven't done anything is because of this." This raises a further, potentially troubling, question: What are researchers and psychological professionals to make of sadistic paedophiles who do act on their urges? This will be discussed in a later section. In any event it should be acknowledged that the category "incorrigible", that this sub-section relates to, may thankfully refer more to a façade that the H2CW's members adopted than to a genuine state of affairs.

#### **4.2.17 The "desirous" child vs. absence of consideration.**

Discussions of what it was that children want occurred in over 9% of coded segments from the PSCW. These most often related to a specific child, but they could also relate to children in general. The members of PSCW apparently genuinely believed that what they were doing was not harmful, and that they were only responding to children's sexual desires. However, when one examines the descriptions of what participants believed a child wanted, one notices that it often seemed to coincide with the participants' needs. This became most obvious when there was a conflict where the paedophile wanted one thing and the child wanted another. PSC3 described how they moved from platonic touch to caressing a girl's chest. The girl responded by pushing their hand away; a clear indication that she did not enjoy the physical contact. Despite this, PSC3 stated that they persisted in their unwanted actions.

If one considers this along with the issue of boundaries discussed above, one is left with a question. If the PSCW's participants' perceptions were accurate, and their behaviour really was in line with what the child wanted, then why were so many of their conversations devoted to methods of pushing the boundaries of what a child found acceptable? The reason is that if they did not push the boundaries then the sexual contact that they desired would never occur.

The boundary-crossing interactions the participants had with children were not about the child “exploring their sexuality”. They were, as Goode (2009) has said, about the adult imposing their sexuality onto the child. It was not about what the child wanted. It was about the paedophile trying to make the child want what the adult wanted. This becomes yet easier to see when one examines the occurrences of the category “child resistance” which denotes ways in which children resisted the attempts to engage them in sexual contact. This category occurred in just over 3% of coded segments. If the PSCW participant’s claims that they were guided by what the child wanted were accurate then one would expect these cases to consist of the child enforcing a boundary and the paedophile respecting it. On the contrary, however, most of the time when child resistance was mentioned by participants, it was either glossed over as if it was not important, or it was viewed as an obstacle to be overcome, and the conversation typically then moved on to how participants might achieve their goals (PSC5). When these facts are considered it seems apparent that the PSCW participants’ belief that they were being guided by the child’s desires was simply not true, something non-paedophiles would find obvious. Sadly, this clear contradiction was not commented on by members of the community.

Once again, the H2CW participants were quite different. On the H2CW what the victim wanted was rarely discussed (just over 1% of coded segments) and when it was discussed it was typically done in such a way as to harm or disparage the victim. One example of this is victim blaming. For instance, H2C3 stated that since a particular child enjoyed being photographed, they must have wanted to be sexually assaulted. Another example were discussions of how one could determine what a child wanted, simply in order to take it away from them, and enjoy the disappointment that this caused. H2C34 commented that she drove her daughter to a fast food restaurant before telling her that “she gets no food at all (tonight)”. When a comparison is made between these cases and how often the members discussed their own desires it becomes apparent that the H2CW’s members did not feel the need to defend their actions through a self-serving deception the way the PSCW’s members did. They sometimes used victim blaming as an implied justification for their abuse but even those cases did not occur very often. It seems as if, for the H2CW’s members, the fact that they wanted something was justification enough for doing anything to get it. H2C9 went so far as to argue that individuals who felt the need to provide a justification for their actions were simply “weak” and “stupid”.

However, as before, it must be noted that the H2CW appeared to have been dominated more by fantasy than by actual behaviour. Indeed, one thread entitled “Fantasy vs Reality [sic]”

posed the question to the site's members about whether they would ever act on their urges. Over a dozen of the site's members responded saying that they would not, due to a fear of being apprehended, prosecuted, and jailed. A much smaller number stated that they would not act on their urges for moral reasons, and only three stated that they had acted on their urges already. Thus, as with some of the issues covered above, it is possible that discussions of what their child victims want were not conducted because they had no place in the fantasy that the H2CW's members were indulging in.

#### **4.2.18 Guilt vs. the absence of guilt.**

Discussions of feelings of guilt occurred in over 4% of coded segments on the PSCW. While some members, PSC51 for example, spoke about how they did not feel guilty about anything that they did, including full-scale child sexual abuse, other members expressed guilty feelings that stemmed from a variety of actions. For example, PSC71 stated that:

“My biggest struggle by far is my guilt along with fear of being caught(arrested). The guilt I know comes from my religious beliefs. While I am not anything close to a devote christian I do have strong beliefs that are important to my and my life. Of course my guilt leads in to my fear of being caught which leads me to keep nothing on hand. Which out of necessity if you will always brings me back to TOR looking for something more to get the fix for that moment [sic]”.

Further, PSC3 commented that “The feeling of guilt and the big "what if she told" constantly ran through my mind. I truly wish I had gone a bit further, but what's done is done”. Viewing IIOC, particularly IIOC where the child was visibly distressed, was a common example. Guilt could also be caused by committing acts of sexual abuse, or from desiring to do so. Lying to one's loved ones was another common cause. A point of interest was the disjunction that seemed to exist between things that the members found arousing and the things that they found to be morally correct. PSC26 for example spoke of how they felt guilty “when I see things where...there's no way the child can be enjoying” what is being done to them. In spite of feeling guilty, however, PSC26 stated that they still “masturbated to it” which seemed to increase the guilt that they felt. At the other end of the scale was PSC9 who stated that their moral concerns typically overpowered their sexual needs and that “the discomfort of a child precludes (their) ability to be aroused”. It could be argued that this illustrates that these paedophiles seemed to be experiencing conflict between their biological urges and their moral reasoning.

In contrast discussions of guilty feelings did not occur very often in the coded segments of the H2CW board, and on those occasions when it was mentioned it was typically condemned as weakness. H2C34 raged at what they called “weak men” who were concerned about the welfare of children. The H2CW’s members seemed to revel in the harmful behaviours that they wished to engage in, and in the sadistic IIOC that they consumed. “If you want to fulfill your urges, don't feel guilty about it! [sic]” said H2C41, and this seemed to summarise the predominant feeling on the site.

## **Chapter 5: Different Types of Paedophilia**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter argues that a subtype of paedophile, the “pedosadist”, exists and that these individuals have characteristics that differ from other paedophiles who may, in contrast, be best thought of as “pedosexuals”. Evidence to support these claims will also be presented. The chapter will also explore examples of individuals who do not fit into either the pedosadist or pedosexual category and yet still appear to be potential child physical and sexual abusers. The implications of their existence for the emerging theory are discussed. The chapter then concludes with a description of the new theory: a proposed typology of paedophilia.

Given the results set out in the previous chapter, it seems likely that the individuals who typically frequented PSCW and H2CW were in some ways different. Both groups self-identified as paedophiles and yet their desires, attitudes, and behaviours seem dissimilar, even mutually exclusive, in important ways. What this suggests is that the participants who populated do not constitute a homogenous group. In fact, the participants themselves agreed. The members of both websites disparaged the types of people who frequented the other website, and there was no doubt in any of their minds that the two groups had very little in common besides a fascination with children. H2C22 described non-sadistic paedophiles in condescending, childlike terms. A member of the PSCW stated that they believed that individuals who enjoy hurtcore IIOC were probably psychopaths (PSC8) and shouldn't be considered paedophiles at all. PSCW72 opined that those who enjoy hurtcore were “pedos who want to hurt kids, not love them”. Furthermore, the PSCW's members tended to think of the H2CW's members as being insensitive, sadistic, monsters and the H2CW's members viewed the PSCW's members as weak hypocrites whose preferred form of child abuse was just as bad as theirs. With the differences discussed in the sections above in mind the following two paedophile subtypes are proposed:

- A) Pedosexual
- B) Pedosadist

### **5.2 Perceived “Degrees” of Violence.**

When exploring the differences between these two potential groups of paedophiles the issue of violent abuse is of central importance, and the question of what should be considered ‘violent’, when discussing child sexual abuse, should be briefly debated. All child abuse, from the most subtle to the most egregious, involves an imbalance of power between the child and the adult, and it is primarily this imbalance of power that is responsible for the interaction being abusive. But one can justifiably ask how a rape is somehow “less violent” than a physical assault, since both are forms of serious abuse. This is a worthwhile question however for the purposes of this thesis one must remember that any differences between the various participants that are discussed relate only to how the participants *themselves* characterised their behaviours and actions. That is to say the PSCW’s members desired sexual contact that appeared to them to be sufficiently non-harmful that they were able to rationalise their enjoyment of it. The members of the H2CW were quite the opposite in that they desired sexual contact that appeared so violent and destructive that no one could fail to believe that harm was being caused. The key issue for this research is not how harmful the various acts described by the participants were, but rather how harmful the various kinds of participants *believed* them to be. The first group believed that certain forms of child sexual abuse are not harmful, and the second group agreed with them. For the first group this made those acts more desirable and for the second group it made them less desirable.

### **5.3 The Pedosexual.**

The detailed discussion of the coding set out above seems to reveal a distinct group of participants from the PSCW. These participants were interested in creating relationships with children, typically with the end goal of engaging in sexual abuse of the child. The researcher has decided to label this group “pedosexuals”. It should be noted that this use of the term ‘pedosexual’ is very different from that used by German researchers for whom the German word ‘pädosexuellen’ translates easily into English as “pedosexual”. In such cases the term is identical to the term “paedophile”, but it is not often used in this way (Urban & Fiebig, 2011). The coding and discussion further seem to reveal that pedosexuals can in turn can be broken up into “active” and “conservative” types. The active pedosexuals believed that sexual contact between adults and children is moral if it is done in a way that minimises harm to the child. They are referred to in this thesis as active because they actively seek sexual contact with children. They were either currently in a situation in which they were able to have sexual contact with children, or they were on the lookout for such opportunities. This active group did

not use that term to refer to themselves, with most instead labelling themselves simply as “pedos” (PSC27). The data suggest that this group is the largest subtype of paedophile and it certainly encompasses the majority of the study’s participants. Most of the members of the PSCW appear to be ‘active’ pedosexuals.

The self-named “conservative” paedophiles are pedosexuals (that is to say they are sexually attracted to children but do not wish to harm them) who believe that sexual contact between children and adults can be harmful and is a violation of the rights of the child. They were discussed in detail earlier in this chapter but in order to explain how they fit into the emerging theory certain key aspects will be revisited. Participants from this group stated that they are “deeply attracted to real life young girls” while also being “committed to not engaging in a real-life sexual relationship with a young girl because the potential for harm is too great” (PSC20). It is this fear of harm being caused that pushed the conservative pedosexuals to admit that adults should not engage in sexual contact with children, in spite of a desire on their part to do so. On the PSCW they had their own sub-forum in which they sought to support each other in not acting on their urges. In a way they treated paedophilia as an addiction; something that provoked a persistent desire and that had to be fought against constantly. One example of this struggle was evident in PSC31 who stated that they felt they were making progress. They no longer sought to sexually abuse children and by controlling their urges they were steadily getting closer to avoiding IIOC altogether. The conservative paedophiles are nonetheless clearly still paedophiles because their desires remained unchanged and because they typically used IIOC as a sexual release. PSC31’s desire to cease consuming IIOC at all appeared to be “the exception” (PSC12), not the rule.

What binds the conservative and active pedosexuals together is the belief that children must never be harmed. What separates them is whether or not they believe that it is possible for an adult to engage in sexual contact with a child that does not harm the child. Once an active pedosexual begins to believe that their behaviour may hurt their child “partners” they would become part of the conservative camp. Therefore, pedosexuals can only act on their urges if they believe that those actions are *not* harmful to children.



#### 5.4 The Pedosadist.

The detailed discussion of the coding set out above seems to reveal a second distinct group of participants. The researcher has decided to refer to this group as “pedosadists”. Pedosadists, like pedosexuals, are sexually attracted to children. However, the form that this attraction takes is very different. They speak of children only as objects to be abused and tortured. One spoke explicitly about how they wanted video recordings of children “screaming” (H2C25). Others discussed at length how the idea of murdering a child was their “ultimate fantasy” (H2C41). As mentioned above it is impossible to separate fantasy from reality when reading through the pedosadists’ accounts of their activities. However, their desire for the scenes they described to be real was openly stated and endorsed by other members of the group. From analysing the real and imagined sex discussed on the H2CW one can see that unlike pedosexuals the pedosadists had little interest in cultivating “relationships” with children. They typically spoke only in terms of single encounters and took it as given that the target they selected would never see them again. This was either because the target would be so scarred by the experience that they would never wish to see the pedosadist again or, in tales that were all too common, because the victim had died as a result of the attack. The only exceptions seemed to be in cases where the pedosadist had a pre-existing relationship with the victim. For example, a mother who enjoyed hurting her daughter (H2C34), and a brother who was planning to drug and then rape his younger sister (H2C35).

In these cases, some effort was made to hide the behaviour. For example, the abusive mother was advised to only hurt her daughter when some sort of justification could be made for it. She was told to create rules her daughter could not always obey, so that if her punishment was discovered she could claim that it was part of the socially-acceptable punishment that parents inflict on their children. Another member was advised to claim that they were taking baths with their daughter “in order to save water” (H2C13). Another user, H2C9, advised the other members to use “emotional blackmail” against family members to force them to comply with their wishes. And H2C7 talked about how it should be possible to follow the example of Joseph Fritzl, and imprison their targets “in a basement dungeon, permanently”.

Domination and the inflicting of pain were the focus of the encounter for pedosadists. They devoted considerable time to describing multiple means of causing physical, emotional, and psychological pain. They consumed hurtcore IIOC and the main section of the H2CW was subtitled quite literally: “Tell us how you like to make them scream” (H2C62). They

complained when their IIOC didn't show enough pain or didn't show pain clearly enough. H2C1 complained to the other members that a particular piece of IIOC would have been "the best", except that one could not see the agony on the victim's face. For pedosadists causing pain is the desired goal. And they openly stated as much themselves. It is from this pain and their power over their victim that their satisfaction is derived. Consequently, it would appear that pedosadists only act on their urges if they believe that harm *is* being caused.

## **5.5 Exceptional Cases**

Once the existence of two separate types of paedophile emerged from the data and were given labels, the researcher revisited the data. This was done in order to explore whether the theory appeared to hold true and to attempt to see whether any of the participants did not fit into either category. The purpose was firstly to see whether the two proposed categories of pedosexual and pedosadist did indeed reflect distinct groups, and secondly to see whether any other groups that had not yet been identified might exist. During this process several exceptional cases that bear discussion were indeed found.

### **5.5.1 Opportunistic sadistic abuser.**

H2C34, one of the participants from the H2CW, repeatedly stated that while she derived pleasure from causing children pain, she did not desire any sexual contact with children at all. She also spoke of how she had previously derived pleasure from inflicting pain upon a family pet. Thus, H2C34 appeared to be a sadist but not a paedophile. If this was indeed the case then it implies, she was a sadistic physical abuser who targeted children simply because she had the opportunity to do so, and not because of any particular fascination with children. She was a sadist, but not a paedophile, and the existence of individuals who manifest this type of abusive behaviour has been acknowledged by some researchers (Pflugrad, & Allen, 2012).

### **5.5.2 Opportunistic sexual abuser.**

As was discussed in the review of literature it is well established in the research on sexual abuse that a certain percentage of child sexual abusers are not paedophiles, and sexually assault

children for other reasons. The most common factors involved are curiosity, boredom, the influence of narcotics or alcohol, and seeing a child as a possible outlet for sexual urges in the absence of any other such outlet (Seto, 2004). These individuals are thus similar to the opportunistic sadistic abusers because they do not have any particular fascination with children, but target children simply because they have the opportunity to do so.

### **5.5.3 Indifferent pedosexual.**

Some participants stated that seeing children in pain did not have any effect on them at all. That is to say that it did not arouse them as it would a pedosadist, but similarly it did not trouble them in the same way that it seemed to trouble the other pedosexuals. These individuals appeared to be entirely indifferent to the plight of children and were not concerned with operating in a way that they could rationalise as being non-harmful. If this was the case, then this would imply that these individuals represent a subcategory of pedosexual.

### **5.5.4 Conservative pedosadist.**

Some of the participants from both H2TC and PSCW stated that while they were aroused by hurtcore IIOC they would never seek to re-enact it in their day-to-day life, because they could never imagine actually harming a child. PSC32 stated that when they masturbated to hurtcore IIOC their enjoyment of it only lasted until they achieve climax, and that afterwards they experienced intense guilt at having done so. Similarly, H2C63 stated that they would never act on their urges because they could never imagine actually harming a child, even though they desired to do so. Guilt is not a common characteristic amongst pedosadists as originally conceptualised, and thus such individuals do not appear to fit into either the pedosadist or pedosexual categories. This suggests the existence of a group of conservative pedosadists who are similar to the conservative pedosexuals in that one respect. It bears repeating however that in order to be a conservative paedophile one must refrain from acting on one's urges because one has a moral objection to child physical and sexual abuse. Refraining from abuse because one is afraid of being arrested and punished is insufficient, because it implies that if the circumstances were such that arrest was impossible these individuals would continue their abuse unabated. In any event there appear to be at least a small number of pedosadists on both websites who are *de facto* conservatives.

## 5.6 A Challenge for the Theory

With cases emerging from the data that did not fit within the proposed over-arching categories of pedosadist and pedosexual the question of whether these two categories remained descriptively meaningful had to be asked. The key challenge was to determine which of these categories, if any, were large enough to justify their inclusion in the emerging theory.

While attempting to address this issue new data were found on the H2CW that made answering this question possible. A thread was started on the H2CW that consisted of a personal survey. The participants in this “PedoSurvey” thread (as it was called by the original poster H2C52) were asked five questions that related to their attraction to children. The questions covered which ages, races, and hair colours the members found most attractive, what type of IIOC they favoured, and whether they felt a responsibility to look after the children whom they abused. The survey was completed by 128 self-identified paedophiles. A screenshot of some of these data is included below as an illustration. In accordance with ethical considerations around confidentiality the image has been cropped to prevent one from reading the profile names of the users.

Fully analysing these data is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, by briefly examining just two of the questions, data that supported the emerging theory could be obtained. The question about what form of IIOC the participants favoured is directly related to the separation between pedosexuals and pedosadists; pedosadists would be expected to state that they enjoy hurtcore (clearly violent) IIOC and pedosexuals would be expected to state that they enjoy either soft core (nude, nonsexual) IIOC or hard core (explicitly sexual, non-violent) IIOC. Likewise, the question that related to whether the participants should take care of children is also relevant to this study. If the proposed theory is accurate, and pedosexuals believe that their actions must be non-harmful, then one would expect them to state that they should take care of children. Pedosadists on the other hand would be expected to state that they do not believe that they have a responsibility to care for children, since their favoured IIOC relies on harm being inflicted.

Thus, there should be a correlation between the type of IIOC the participants enjoy and their feelings of responsibility towards children’s safety. By examining the relationship between these two questions a rough understanding of how common the different subtypes of

paedophile are could be obtained. For example, if a large number of participants favour hurtcore IIOC but believe that they should care for children then that would imply that conservative pedosadists are common. Likewise, if the opposite is true and a large number of participants prefer hard core IIOC to hurtcore IIOC but do not feel a responsibility to care for children then that would imply that indifferent pedosexuals are a large subtype. However, if the two proposed main categories of pedosadist and pedosexual are valid then one would expect a strong relationship between the answers of these two questions, with individuals either enjoying hurtcore IIOC and being unconcerned about children's welfare, or not enjoying hurtcore IIOC and believing that they should look after children.

**Figure 5.1 PedoSurvey Screenshot**

e	5-10	5.00	10.00	1.00	3.00	2.00	3.00
iod	2-12	2.00	12.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	3.00
meofflg	9-11	9.00	11.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	2.00
xboyx	4-16	4.00	16.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	1.00
oo	0-5	0.00	5.00	1.00	2.00	1.00	2.00
Person	6-12	6.00	12.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
leone	7-18	7.00	18.00		2.00	3.00	2.00
uzzler	3-12	3.00	12.00	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00
5	6-12	6.00	12.00		2.00	2.00	2.00
	6-12	6.00	12.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	
hurts82	0-5	0.00	5.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
geryder	6-12	6.00	12.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
ow	4-11	4.00	11.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	2.00
honey	1-5	1.00	5.00		2.00	2.00	2.00
sticGirl					2.00	1.00	2.00
hjkIm	13-16	13.00	16.00	1.00	3.00	2.00	2.00
195309	8-15	8.00	15.00		2.00	2.00	2.00
h	0-5	0.00	5.00	1.00	2.00		1.00
azah	6-13	6.00	13.00		2.00	2.00	2.00
shin	6-12	6.00	12.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
deadpixe	0-16	0.00	16.00	3.00	1.00	2.00	3.00
oki	6-12	6.00	12.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
way985	6-11	6.00	11.00	3.00	3.00	1.00	2.00
souls10	6-12	6.00	12.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
lfr	7-11	7.00	11.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
ashed Lc	6-12	6.00	12.00		2.00		2.00
	6-12	6.00	12.00		2.00	2.00	2.00
y1950	13-16	13.00	16.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
U	12-15	12.00	15.00	1.00	2.00	1.00	2.00
bridge	0-10	0.00	10.00		3.00	3.00	1.00
d4B@bi	0-4	0.00	4.00		3.00	3.00	2.00
234	10-14	10.00	14.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00

Upon examining the data derived from these two questions it was found that out of a total of 121 participants who answered both questions 100 of them (83%) did indeed

demonstrate this relationship. They either enjoyed hurtcore IIOC and disregarded children's welfare, or they did not enjoy hurtcore IIOC and felt that children should be looked after. Of the 21 exceptional examples, 15 did not enjoy hurtcore and did not care for children, and six did care about children's welfare and yet stated that they also enjoyed hurtcore IIOC. This implies that these two subcategories are indeed unusual and numerically rare compared to the proposed main subtypes: pedosexual and pedosadist. It also suggests that these two categories likely do represent significant categories of paedophiles. Further, it further indicates that conservative pedosadists and indifferent pedosexuals are not entirely anomalous and may constitute a measurable percentage of paedophiles as a whole.

### **5.7 The Theory: A Proposed Typology of Potential Child Physical and Sexual Abusers**

The purpose of a grounded theoretic investigation is the creation of a theory that explains the data. In this case the participants' discussions seemed to imply the existence of multiple subtypes of paedophiles, as well as other physical and sexual abusers of children. Through the process of examining the differences between the participants' beliefs and behaviours, as well as the existing research literature, several possible categories and sub-categories emerged. The finalised version of the theory conceptualises potential physical and sexual abusers as being differentiated according to four factors. These factors can each be formulated as a question that should be asked about the individual, and these questions form the second core category of the grounded theoretic analysis. This core category is simply called "four key questions". These questions may potentially differentiate several subtypes of potential child physical and sexual abusers.

These four questions are:

- A. Are they sadistic?
- B. Do they have a sexual fascination with children?
- C. Would they act on their urges if given the opportunity?
- D. Would a realisation that they are causing harm make them stop?

Grounded theoretic investigations attempt to convey theories in graphic format in order to assist comprehension (Charmaz, 1990). The four key questions lend themselves to a flowchart



format which can effectively illustrate how the subtypes relate to one another. This flowchart has been included at the end of this chapter, and also as Appendix C. In the graphic the two main types of paedophile, namely pedosexual and pedosadist remain but certain changes to the initial proposed theory have been made. Firstly, two subtypes of abuser that are neither pedosexuals nor pedosadists have been included. These are the opportunistic abusers; individuals who are not particularly interested in children, but who target children because they are vulnerable. This inclusion seems justified since it is well established in the literature that a sizeable percentage of child sexual abusers do not appear to have paedophilia (Schmidt, Mokros & Banse, 2013). Secondly, there are several subtypes of pedosexual and pedosadist. Conservative pedosexuals and pedosadists are distinguished because while they experience the same desires as the typical pedosexuals and pedosadists they believe that acting on their urges would be immoral. In contrast active pedosexuals and pedosadists believe, either through rationalisation or minimisation of the victim, that they are permitted to act on their urges. Lastly, active pedosexuals are separated into concerned pedosexuals who would halt their behaviour if they believed that what they were doing was harmful to the child they are sexually abusing, and the indifferent pedosexuals who are neither aroused by the harm that they cause nor discouraged by it. If this breakdown is accurate it should have significant implications for the diagnosis, identification, and treatment of paedophiles and as well as the prosecution of child physical and sexual abusers.

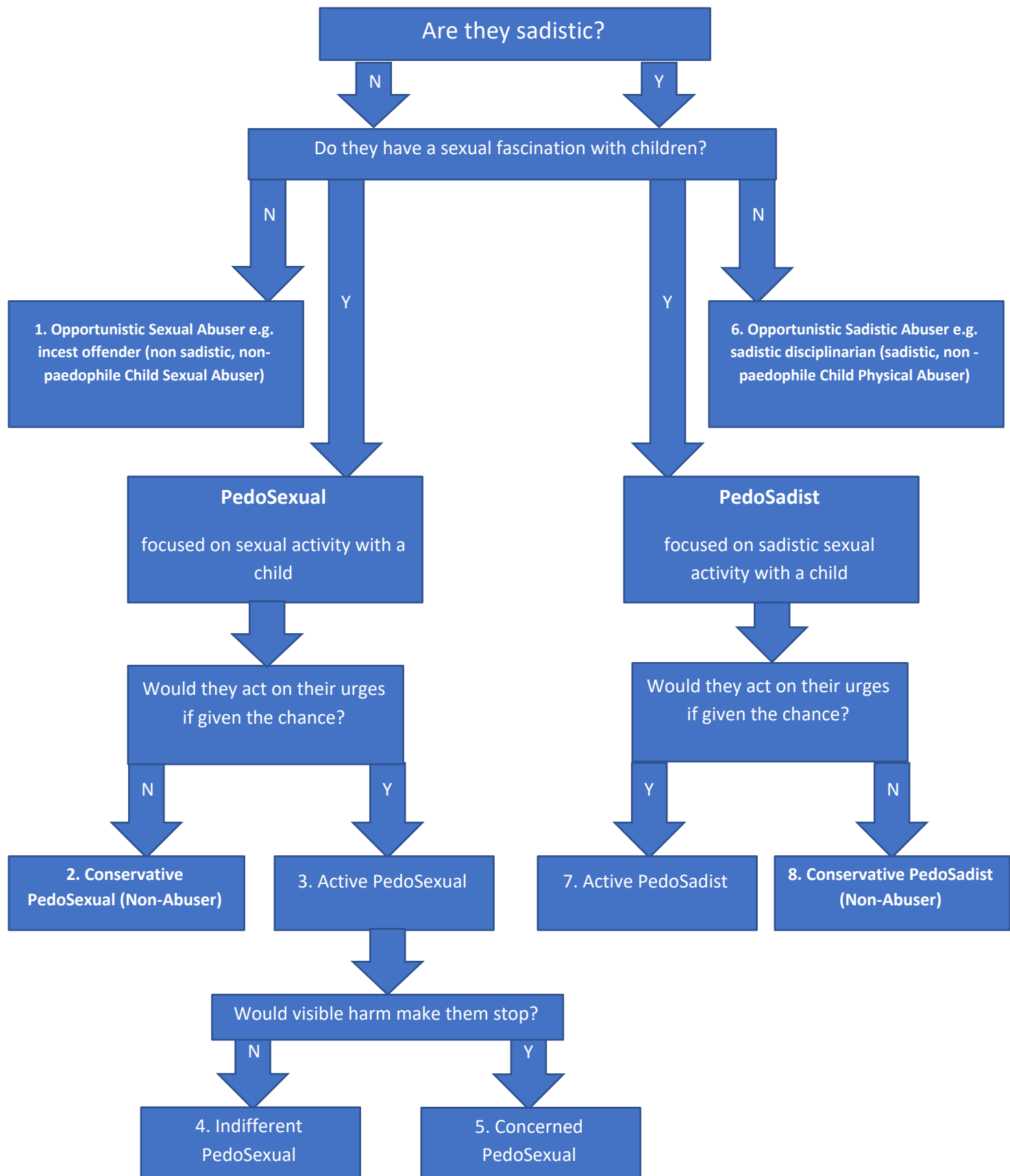
## **5.8 Conclusion**

Given the grouping of similar characteristics that emerged from the grounded theoretic analysis of two darknet paedophile websites it can be argued that paedophilia is best thought of as two separate but related categories; that of the pedosexual and the pedosadist. Furthermore, these two types of paedophiles may in turn be divisible into additional subtypes. Lastly, it can be argued that there also exist two subtypes of child physical and sexual abuser that exist outside of the pedosexual and pedosadist types, that of the opportunistic offenders who are not paedophiles and who do not have a particular interest in children, but target them because they are available and vulnerable. The identification of these types has led to the creation of a proposed typology of potential child physical and sexual abusers. This typology constitutes the finalised grounded theory about the paedophiles encountered on the two websites under

investigation and how their characteristics relate to child physical and sexual abusers as a whole.



**Figure 5.2 A Proposed Typology of Potential Child Physical and Sexual Abusers**



## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter attenuates the strands of this thesis, leading to its overall tentative conclusions and how these may contribute to the corpus of paedophile research. It begins with an exploration of the strengths and limitations of the current study, particularly as contrasted to the general field of work as it currently stands. It briefly covers the primary findings of the research and then explores implications of these findings in depth. Furthermore, it discusses how these findings and implications fit into the current research literature. Lastly, it covers possible directions for further research, and finishes with a brief overview of the thesis as a whole.

### **6.2 Limitations**

No research study is perfect and whilst the current study has many strengths, (as discussed in the next section) it was equally not without weaknesses. It bears mentioning again that the data under examination were taken from just two paedophile websites (the ‘Hurt 2 the Core’ Website or ‘H2CW’ and the ‘Pedophile Support Community’ Website or ‘PSCW’) and thus may not be generalizable beyond those two online spaces. The administrators of the PSCW claimed that it was by far the largest such website in the world and, with tens of thousands of posts on the site at time of writing, they may have been correct. But while the PSCW might indeed be one of largest such websites in existence, this does not mean that it is necessarily representative of paedophiles as a whole.

Likewise, online contributions to such forums may ironically be guilty of what could be called, somewhat tongue in cheek, ‘faking bad’. i.e. Participants could wish to exaggerate certain experiences and blur the lines between fantasy and reality. Presumably there would be limits to how much they would wish to do this, because exaggerating matters to a point where a participant’s experience no longer solicited validation, advice (etc.) would clearly be counterproductive and against self-interest. Despite the relative likelihood of honesty, however, it remains possible that participants were dishonest or did exaggerate.

Considering that the research occurred within the narrow context of two websites, and that honesty could not be absolutely guaranteed, it should not be assumed that this research is

generalizable to everyone with paedophilia. This is especially true given that paedophiles appear to be a highly varied group according to both what has been encountered during this research and through the work of Howitt (1995), Seto (2004), Goode (2009), et al. The largest weakness, which has been mentioned previously, is the fact that it involved just two websites and focused primarily on only one of those. As was discussed each site had a unique culture which stemmed mainly from the differences between the sites' members. However, arbitrary factors affecting the site's culture also existed.

One example would be the apparent gradual move by certain key members of the PSCW away from the endorsement of active sexual abuse. One cannot be sure how cultural changes such as these may have affected the findings of the study. Thus, whilst the findings appear valid for these two websites it is possible that they cannot be generalized to paedophiles as a whole. Even if these two websites are representative of paedophile websites as a whole, they would still be more representative of paedophiles who are active on the Internet, than paedophiles who are not. Indeed, there is research that suggests that differences exist between online IIOC offenders and other sexual offenders who are attracted to children (Nielssen, O'Dea, Sullivan, Rodriguez, Bourget & Large, 2011; Babchishin, Hanson & VanZuylen, 2015).

Additionally, since both websites were Anglophonic their members may not be fully representative of paedophiles who do not have English as one of their main languages. Some members clearly had English as a second language and while site members typically did not call attention to this, it is likely that this factor affected their participation. There were also other demographic factors that may have had unidentified effects, and many such factors could not be determined, because of the secrecy with which the respondents conducted their online activities.

It was impossible to determine the age or nationality of any of the respondents. Gender was also difficult to determine. In fact, PSC68 began a discussion thread specifically to ask whether she was the only woman on the board. Furthermore, the H2CW was extremely short-lived and thus it is possible that the site's members' apparent coldness to one another may have been a result of them not having an opportunity to get to know one another particularly well. This is obviously in sharp contrast to the members of the PSCW many of whom had 'known' each other (in the online sense) for years.

It may equally be the case that active pedosadists are actually under-represented in the data from the H2CW. As was discussed in the previous chapter the so-called ‘pedosurvey’ discussion thread revealed that only about 12 percent of the respondents fell into the category of ‘active pedosadist’. The rest, as per the taxonomy proposed currently, were pedosexuals, conservative pedosadists, and a handful of atypical members. Consequently, it is entirely possible that the differences between pedosexuals and pedosadists are even more glaring than they appeared, due to the influence of pedosexuals on the H2CW.

During the coding process care was taken to focus attention on threads that were popular, because their popularity implied that they were more representative than threads the members rejected as uninteresting. But if the H2CW truly did contain far more pedosexuals than pedosadists this tactic would not solve the problem. Nevertheless, the preponderance of support for the sadistic abuse of children in the data implies that pedosadists dominated the conversation on the H2CW. This is not unexpected, since the introduction to the site and the guidelines for posting openly stated that it was intended as a place for sadistic paedophiles to congregate. However, it is still possible that the striking differences between the members of the two sites may have been influenced by each site’s unique culture in addition to the differences between pedosexuals and pedosadists.

### **6.3 Strengths**

In addition to the weaknesses discussed above, the study also had several strengths. The most obvious of these is that it represents a relatively unexplored area of research, as highlighted in the introductory chapter, and literature review. Obvious issues plaguing most research into paedophilia include the difficulty of guaranteeing participant anonymity (especially given ethical conflicts, in which a researcher or clinician has an obligation to report potentially harmful activity should they become aware of it), often very small sample sizes (since many studies take place within the context of an institution or therapy) and clinician bias (particularly on account of institutional contact, mores, and the difficulty of obtaining distance within a clinical or institutional setting). Despite online research having certain evident pitfalls (some of which are highlighted above), many of the limitations of offline traditional research are ameliorated if one conducts research on the web. Sample size is theoretically, and usually practically, much larger (for instance, the current study had roughly 130 participants). Although research bias cannot be entirely sidestepped, since all researchers carry ideological

positions, preconceptions etc., it remains salient that it is easier to observe data in a comparatively distanced way where participants are not personally “known” and where interactions are not as immediate as would be the case in face to face interview and research. These benefits, particularly in the context of sensitive research such as applies to the field of paedophilia, are especially apparent for the darknet, when users and researchers use software such as TOR. Such a context provides especially robust levels of anonymity and participant security, making it that much more likely that fuller disclosure is given by participants who may otherwise be far more reluctant to share their phenomenological experience.

As far as can be determined at time of writing no other studies of darknet paedophile websites have been performed. Goode (2009) used darknet sites that she accessed via Freenet to identify paedophiles for her study, but she was forced by circumstance to place them in a situation in which their identities could be exposed. This naturally calls into question the degree to which honest disclosure by participants remained feasible. This calls attention to a second benefit of this study: it is arguably the only study on paedophiles in which the respondents were not subject to the normal incentives to be dishonest with the researcher about their activities. Most of the analysed communications occurred between participants in circumstances where honesty provided more benefit to them than lying could. There are of course exceptions where members would add misleading details to their accounts of their actions in order to further obfuscate their identities. Furthermore, as was discussed previously, they deliberately blurred the line between fantasy and reality when speaking of their exploits. However, as noted earlier, it is the truthfulness of the participants subjective experiences that is of importance to this study; and not whether their accounts described real events.

Moreover, given the methodology employed in this study, participants’ discussions on their subjective experience of having paedophilia, their goals and desires, the pressure they felt from society, their beliefs about sexuality (particularly childhood sexuality), and many other issues of relevance are very much more likely to be accurate, because lying provided no advantage to the speaker, whereas being truthful would lead to discussions that were useful to them (in terms of advice, validation, support etc.). In all other such research some incentive to be dishonest or ‘fake good’ (or at the least a pressure to conceal the truth) appears to exist. This is especially true in clinical and institutional settings, which make up the majority of paedophile research. To illustrate, even the pioneering ‘Dunkelfeld’ project (Beier et al., 2009), in which confidentiality was guaranteed to a high degree, was intended only for paedophiles who had never acted on their urges. This introduced both the possibility that their sample is skewed

towards conservative paedophiles and also that active paedophiles who desire treatment may have signed up for the project and then been forced to lie about their prior or current actions.

Furthermore, it is difficult to imagine a circumstance in which an active pedosadist would be honest about their desires, fantasies, and real-world actions other than in a situation which afforded legitimately robust anonymity. Furthermore, it is questionable whether such an environment even exists, and certainly whether it is easily accessible, except for on an anonymous website. Pedosadists are highly unlikely to be fully honest even with therapists, and most certainly with law enforcement, medical professionals, researchers, or anyone else in any circumstance in which their identity might be compromised. They are even more secretive than active pedosexuals because the consequences they face are even more severe and their behaviour is even more difficult for others to understand.

It seems possible that this is the primary reason why the existence of pedosadists has not been fully explored in research: the means to do so was essentially unavailable. In order to study their beliefs or behaviours, and receive honest responses, one would need to create a situation in which active pedosadists had a reason to speak honestly about their experiences. Additionally, they would need an absolute guarantee that they would be free from punishment, or even condemnation, that might stem from having done so. It is difficult to imagine many circumstances in which this could be achieved, other than that which was examined by the current study: anonymous darknet websites.

## **6.4 Summary of Findings**

In the literature review it was mentioned that both paedophiles and child sexual abusers in general are described differently in psychological, legal, and medical research. These different means of describing them often lead to classification pluralism: the use of multiple theoretical constructs to describe the same phenomenon. In the literature review it was pointed out that the public as a whole possesses a skewed and highly negative perception of paedophiles. This studies results showed that some paedophiles find this perception unbearable. For this reason, as stated by a number of participants, they seek out websites on the darknet both as a means of gaining access to IIOC, and also as a way of receiving emotional support. Additionally, they use these websites as a way of constructing an identity that they find acceptable (and can thus adopt), that is in direct opposition to the identity imposed upon them by society.

This identity was summarised by the first core category of the grounded theoretic analysis: “it’s not about sexual abuse”. This phrase reflects the dominant belief amongst the paedophiles on the PSCW. It embodies the identity the paedophiles were attempting to construct, because the paedophiles themselves believed that the acts of sexual abuse they performed on children were not truly abusive and also because they desired relationships with children that often superseded their sexual desires, or which existed in addition to them. Thus, the sexual component was far from being the only factor at work. However, it should be noted that some of the participants’ primary motivation for cultivating a “relationship” with a child was entirely sexual. That is to say they were not seeking a relationship for its own sake. They were doing so because a relationship was the only way that they could safely commit acts of CSA.

Hence, some of the participants appeared to genuinely desire platonic relationships with children whereas others merely intended to use those relationships to engage in sexual abuse. Others likely lay somewhere in between the two camps. The chapter further described the many ways in which the PSCW was used by its members and what could be learned from it about paedophilia, and the behaviour of paedophiles on the darknet. Specific attention was paid to the use of IIOC, the emergence of the self-named conservative paedophiles, and the danger that exists when members of websites like the PSCW begin to play a role in encouraging paedophiles to actively sexually abuse children. It is perhaps worth noting, additionally, that it is questionable to what extent cognitive distortions meant that participants were unable to honestly view their own actions and motivations. This in turn means that even participants who claimed that their motivations were largely unsexual may have been unwittingly untruthful. Though the circumstance of the research does minimise the incentives to intentionally lie, they cannot be guaranteed to entirely do away with them. Equally it remains possible that others were being untruthful consciously (possibly under pressure from conservative paedophiles, or out of a personal sense of guilt etc.).

The results chapter then put forth an argument for the existence of a sub-type of paedophile dubbed pedosadists who are different from the main type of paedophile that emerged from the analysis namely pedosexuals. The existence of paedophiles with sadistic characteristics is acknowledged in the literature, but their characteristics have not been fully explored, and the idea that they may constitute a distinct group has not been fully discussed within the academic corpus (Howitt, 1995; Pflugrad, & Allen, 2012). The most significant difference between the two groups appears to be that pedosexuals can only act on their urges if they are able to

maintain the belief that their actions are not harmful to children. In contrast pedosadists are aroused by the pain and harm they inflict and thus seem to only achieve satisfaction if they believe that harm is indeed being caused.

Given the nature of their desires and actions studying pedosadists in conventional research is difficult to achieve. Thus, pedosadists have most likely been among populations of paedophiles that have been the subjects of research but have not been identified as being a distinct group. While there are some exceptions (Beauregard, 2010), when the possibility of sadistic paedophiles has been discussed in the literature it has most often been around paedophiles who have anti-social personality disorder (APD) or psychopathy (Strassberg, Eastvold, Kenney, & Suchy, 2012). However, this breakdown does not seem to explain the behaviours of the pedosadists in the current study.

A primary characteristic of APD is a lack of empathy (APA, 2013), which appears not to apply to certain participants who appear otherwise to be pedosadistic. A case in point is H2C62, who was the creator and chief administrator of the H2CW. This website was specifically intended for the sharing and discussion of hurtcore IIOC, yet whilst H2C62 was quite open about the fact that he was both a paedophile and a sadist he repeatedly stated that he would never act on his desires. This, he reported, was because he could never imagine actually inflicting pain on a child. Thus, conservative pedosadists do seem to represent a distinct category, and the empathy that discourages them from acting on their urges makes it highly unlikely that they have APD. A potentially clearer explanation is to suggest that pedosadists are simply individuals who have both paedophilic and sadistic paraphilic disorders concurrently. They are experiencing two paraphilia, and the combination of those paraphilia is causing their sexual desires to manifest in unexpected ways. The idea that someone can experience more than one paraphilia is far from impossible. In fact, it is well established in the literature that a certain percentage of people will have more than one (APA, 2013).

The proposal of pedosadists as a second sub-category of paedophile prompted further investigation to determine whether all paedophiles in the current study did indeed fall into one of these two categories. By examining data created by a survey on the H2CW and individual accounts by members of both sites, as well as an examination of the literature around child abuse, a breakdown of eight types and subtypes of potential child physical and sexual abusers was created. It consists of paedophiles, sadists, and individuals who were both, or neither; all of whom either engaged in child physical or sexual abuse, or potentially would do so.



These findings were expressed visually in the form of a flowchart that relied on asking four key questions about the potential abusers of children. This flowchart has been included as Appendix C. The four key questions are:

- A. Are they sadistic? (Sadist vs. non-sadist)
- B. Do they have a sexual fascination with children? (paedophile vs. non-paedophile)
- C. Would they act on their urges if given the opportunity? (active vs. conservative)
- D. Would a realisation that they are causing harm make them stop? (concerned vs. indifferent)

These four questions may allow us to divide all potential child physical and sexual abusers into the following eight tentative categories:

- Opportunistic Sexual Abuser, for example someone who commits incest with a child. A non-sadist, non-paedophile, child sexual abuser.
- Conservative Pedosexual. A non-sadist, paedophile, who does not act on their urges for fear of harming a child.
- Active Pedosexuals. Non-sadistic paedophiles who will act on their urges if given the opportunity. They are also sub-divisible into categories IV and V.
- Indifferent Pedosexual. A pedosexual who continues with abuse even when they know they are causing harm, not because the harm is arousing but because they are indifferent to the suffering of others.
- Concerned Pedosexual. A pedosexual who would stop their abuse if they realised that what they were doing was harmful to the victim.
- Opportunistic Sadistic Abuser. A non-paedophilic sadist who targets children for physical abuse, not because they have a fetish for children, but because children represent vulnerable targets.
- Active Pedosadist. A sadistic paedophile who would act on their violent, sexual urges if given the chance.
- Conservative Pedosadist. A sadistic paedophile who chooses not to act on their violent sexual urges because they do not wish to cause harm to a child.

At this point, it is valuable to give a disclaimer of sorts. The first and sixth categories (Opportunistic Sexual Abuser, and Opportunistic Sadistic Abuser) here would refer not to paedophilia, but to CSA more broadly. To avoid the common conflation of these two issues, found in much research and in legal and medical practice, it should be added that this category

may itself be large and complex, and worthy of further scrutiny and research. This, however, remains beyond the remit of this thesis, which chooses intentionally to focus primarily on paedophilic experiences. The classification of these two groups proposed here, though knowingly rather blunt, is nonetheless necessary in order to more accurately discriminate within instances of CSA and to determine whether paedophilia / pedosadism / pedosexuality is at play. It should be noted that there is no need for a category of “indifferent pedosadist” because it is not possible for a pedosadist to convince themselves that their behaviour is not harmful, since they require harm to be caused in order to achieve satisfaction. All active pedosadists are by definition indifferent to the suffering of their victims. If this proposed typology is valid, it could potentially be used to divide child physical and sexual abusers into meaningful sub-categories. This has implications for research, legal prosecution and incarceration, emotional support, treatment etc.

## **6.5 Implications**

The largest implication of these findings, if they are accurate, is that much of the research literature on paedophilia and CSA will need to be re-examined. If the eight categories and sub-categories of potential child physical and sexual abusers do exist, then that would imply that they may have been conflated within the literature to an unknown degree. As stated above this tendency toward conflation may have been responsible for pedosadists not being previously recognised as a distinct category.

### **6.5.1 Implications for treatment.**

The results of this thesis have implications for the treatment of individuals with pedosexuality or pedosadism. As Ward and Hudson argue (1998b), an understanding of underlying variables demands different treatment modalities. Interventions are only likely to be successful if they accurately take into account the nature of offender. If the taxonomy currently being proposed holds water, it has attendant implications for how the law would deal with the prosecution, incarceration and treatment of different individuals. In the literature review it was discussed that there are treatments for individuals with paedophilia that have shown some success in convincing paedophiles that sexual contact between adults and children is harmful to the child (Gerardin & Thibaut, 2004). These approaches often involve the paedophile listening to

testimony from abused children in which the victims describe the events from their perspective. To emphasise the traumatic aspects, their retelling of the abuse typically has a particular focus on those aspects that were confusing, frightening, or painful. This approach shatters the cognitive distortions that are required for the paedophile to believe that the experience was enjoyable for the child and not traumatic. This in turn helps the therapist in convincing the paedophile to take part in therapy intended to assist them in resisting their urge to sexually abuse a child. In the parlance of the PSCW the therapy is intended to turn a “pedo” (an active pedosexual) into a “conservative paedophile”.

This form of treatment has been shown to be successful in some cases but not in others. One of the implications of this research is that treatments of this kind should be highly effective when applied to “concerned pedosexuals”, because they are the ones who rely on cognitive distortions to rationalise their behaviour. However, the findings also imply that this form of treatment may be utterly ineffective when applied to “indifferent pedosexuals”. They are aware of the discomfort they cause when they commit abuse, and they do not care. They do not rely on cognitive distortions and thus attempting to break those distortions will not convince them of the wrongness of their actions. There is also a more troubling potential outcome. It has been stated repeatedly in this thesis that pedosadists can only achieve sexual satisfaction if they believe that they are causing pain, harm, and trauma to their victims. Exposing “active pedosadists” to the testimony of abused children, in which they describe the horror that they have suffered, will not convince them of the wrongness of their actions. In fact, it is likely to merely arouse them further, and is therefore likely to reinforce the underlying paraphilia(s). Further, it may make them more likely to want to abuse other children, because it will be a reminder of the things, they find satisfying about committing acts of sadistic abuse. Indeed, one should also be cautious when using this therapeutic approach with “conservative pedosadists” as well. They may not wish to harm children but exposing them to tales of trauma is still likely to leave them sexually aroused, which is in stark opposition to the desired outcome of this form of therapy.

### **6.5.2 Implications for prosecution and incarceration.**

The delineation of the eight categories may also be relevant to the punishment imposed on child physical and sexual abusers. “Opportunistic” physical and sexual abusers, who are not paedophiles, may be at greater risk of re-offending if released from incarceration since it is

reasonable to assume that they have limited impulse control. They are not pushed by their desires to target children the way paedophiles are, they do so because children are vulnerable and because they have limited capacity to resist their desire to abuse. Similarly, “active pedosadists” may present an even higher risk given that, in order to act on their sadistic sexual urges, they must manifest a mix of a lack of impulse control and a lack of empathy. It seems unlikely that information about harm that is being caused would have an effect on individuals with low empathy, and it is difficult to imagine what sort of deterrent would be effective on someone who has a lack of impulse control.

### **6.5.3 Implications for emotional support.**

Another important implication of the study is that there is a great need for emotional and psychological support to be made available for paedophiles. As was discussed many paedophiles are drawn to the darknet because it is the only place where they can speak honestly about their experiences and desires. Indeed, this is the primary purpose of the “Dunkelfeld” project: to provide psychological support to paedophiles who have not acted on their desires and who cannot get support anywhere else (Beier, et al., 2009). Many of this study’s participants stated that they wished to receive psychological therapy, but that they were either afraid to do so due to concerns about being exposed, or that they had attempted therapy and it had failed due to shortcomings on the part of the therapist. Therapy for paedophiles is particularly important since resisting the urge to abuse seems to require a certain amount of emotional energy that a lack of support can erode (Drapeau, et al., 2005).

Furthermore, individuals who seek emotional support on a website populated by a high number of active pedosexuals or active pedosadists may be influenced into acting on their paraphilic impulses when they previously might not have. Indeed, there were several cases on the PSCW in which members stated that they only acted on their urges because of the encouragement and advice they received on the site. In addition to this, some members also attempted to convince others to create new IIOC that would then be distributed across the darknet. Therefore providing these people with emotional support is of great importance, not just for paedophiles but for their potential victims as well.

## **6.6 This Study in the Literature as a Whole.**

This section will provide a comparison between this research study and major emerging themes in the research literature as a whole. It was briefly discussed in a prior chapter that this thesis may appear to be in conflict with current scholarship around paedophilia and child sexual abuse. This part of the chapter will attempt to demonstrate that this is not the case, and that the literature and the current study may be describing the same phenomena.

### **6.6.1 The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5 (DSM-5).**

In the DSM-5 there are six specifiers on paedophilic disorder. Broadly speaking these can be divided into two that focus on attraction (whether they attracted to children exclusively, or are also attracted to adults), three that focus on sexual orientation (whether they are attracted to males, females, or both) and a delimiter used to highlight incest offenders. Anti-social Personality Disorder (APD) is also included as a differential diagnosis, because even non-paedophiles with APD may target children simply because they are vulnerable.

The DSM also includes alcohol and substance use disorders as differential diagnoses because their disinhibiting effect may make an individual more likely to commit acts of child sexual abuse, once again, even if they are not in fact a paedophile. A final differential diagnosis that is included is obsessive-compulsive disorder. It was included because of instances in which individuals complain of intrusive thoughts concerning the possibility that they might be a paedophile, even though they do not seem to be.

The current research may address some of the same issues that the DSM is calling attention to (albeit in a different way). For instance, the attempt to highlight individuals who only commit incestuous acts of child sexual abuse dovetails with the issue of the non-paedophile, opportunistic child sexual abusers; an atypical group, long identified in the literature, that forms part of the model presented in the previous chapter. Similarly, one may argue that this study fits neatly into the framework offered by the DSM because the identified correlation that exists between paedophilia and APD might explain the apparent existence of pedosadists, since inflicting pain on others is one of the primary characterises of APD (APA, 2013). Thus, the DSM might be moving towards the idea that child sexual abuse that involves overt sadism may be best understood as distinct from child sexual abuse that does not. Such an idea can be further advanced and refined by taking into account the categories proposed in this

study, which potentially resolve some obvious conflicts between theory and observable data (e.g. incidents where sadism, surprisingly, may be attended by empathy).

### **6.6.2 Anti-social personal disorder (APD) and pedosadism.**

As was explained above, the correlation that exists between child sexual abuse (CSA) and APD cannot fully explain “pedosadism”, because of the existence of “conservative’ pedosadists”. Of course, this does not mean that all pedosadists are free of APD. It is likely that some active pedosadists do indeed have APD, which is why they have no qualms about acting on their urges. But the existence of conservative pedosadists means that APD cannot fully explain the phenomenon of pedosadism, because one of the most important aspects of APD is a lack of concern for the suffering of others (APA, 2013). It seems possible that pedosadists are, as mentioned above, individuals who have both paedophilia and sadistic paraphilia. Some of these may then additionally have APD.

Although it may at first seem unlikely for one individual to simultaneously have two paraphilia and a personality disorder, this cluster of mental disorders does provide an explanation for why active pedosadists are such a small minority amongst paedophiles. Even on the H2CW, a website devoted to them, they made up just over 12% of the membership (as per the survey discussed in chapter 4). Moreover, research conducted by Neutze, Grundmann, Scherner, and Beier (2012) found that 67% of their study’s sample of men who were sexually attracted to children admitted to having one or more paraphilia in addition to paedophilia. Therefore, the co-occurrence of paedophilia and sadism may not be as unlikely as it first seems.

It may also be the case that active pedosadists who have been diagnosed with APD do not in fact have the disorder. This is possible, due to a confluence of factors that bears detailed explanation. For the sake of argument, imagine an active pedosadist, who does not have APD, committing acts of sadistic child sexual abuse, and then being caught by law enforcement. In the circumstance imagined here they would most likely be identified as having the following traits:

- Disregard for the wellbeing of others
- A tendency to use others for their own benefit
- Disregard for the laws and norms of society

- A tendency towards violence
- Difficulty resisting their impulses.

In such a situation it would not be unreasonable for a clinician to conclude that the individual has APD, even if they do not, because the abuse could only occur if the individual manifests behaviour that fulfils many of the diagnostic criteria for APD.

One may of course ask on what grounds one can say that this imagined individual does not have APD, given that they manifest so many symptoms of it. This question is complicated by the inherent difficulty of accurately diagnosing someone with sexual sadism. Indeed, Saleh, Malin, Grudzinskas, and Vitacco (2010) have argued that clinical diagnoses of sexual sadism are often unreliable, and that individual clinicians frequently disagree. To be clear: it may be the case that all active pedosadists have APD. But this is difficult to determine with certainty, and even if it were true it still would not explain the existence of conservative pedosadists. If they exist (and they certainly say that they do) then there must be a form of pedosadism that exists independently of APD. Indeed, it should be possible for researchers to empirically determine whether or not this is the case. This could be a two-part process which would first involve determining whether conservative pedosadists exist and secondly determining whether there are indeed pedosadists who have been diagnosed as having APD, but in reality do not.

To find out whether conservative pedosadists do indeed exist, researchers could personally interview paedophile child sexual abusers, or paedophile IIOC offenders, who do not appear to have committed any sadistic abuse. Alternatively, they could return to the darknet to find purveyors and consumers of sadistic IIOC, who state that they would never act on their sadistic urges. The researcher could then ask these respondents about their consumption of sadistic IIOC, and whether they have objections to sadistically abusing children themselves. If answers are received in which respondents state that they do enjoy ‘hurtcore’, but that they do not wish to hurt anyone, then this would further imply the existence of conservative pedosadists. Naturally, this assumes that methodological problems (such as the tendency of pedosadists to lie) could be overcome, but in theory it is possible.

In the second stage of the process researchers would then need to find individuals who have been convicted of sadistic sexual abuse of a child, but who may not have APD. The most practical way to do this might be to speak to the friends and family of the sadistic paedophile to find out whether the individual was manipulative, exploitative, or abusive to everyone or

just to their victims. Individuals with APD tend to take advantage of as many people as they can (APA, 2013).

Consequently, if it could be determined that there exist individuals who sadistically sexually abuse children but are otherwise considerate and supportive to those around them, then that would be further evidence that pedosadism can occur without APD, in spite of the similarities in their behaviour. This would be an important step in determining whether pedosadism is simply a combination of two paraphilia or not.

### **6.6.3 Exclusivity: Paedophiles who are also attracted to adults.**

The question of exclusivity (whether a paedophile is only attracted to children or is also attracted to adults) has not been examined in the findings of this study but is interesting and worthy of exploration here. It is possible that this “exclusivity” might link to some idea of “severity”. That is to say those individuals who are exclusively attracted to children might have greater difficulty resisting their urges. It was Finkelhor and Araj (1986) who first argued that an absence of sexual release may make a paedophile more likely to act on their paraphilia. If this is true, then not being exclusively attracted to children might correlate with an individual paedophile’s likelihood of adopting ‘conservatism’ and committing themselves to not abusing children. This possibility seems to bear further investigation.

The question of how exclusivity interacts with “orientation” (i.e. being attracted to males, females, or both) is also an interesting issue, and it is one that the DSM-5 does not fully investigate. The DSM-5 includes a specifier about which children (boys, girls, or both) a paedophile is attracted to, but there is no recommendation to record which adults they are attracted to (if they are the non-exclusive type).

Determining paedophiles’ child sexual orientation is indeed valuable information. But it may be less significant than seeing if there is a relationship between child sexual orientation and adult sexual orientation. Such data could provide fresh insight into the nature of the paraphilia, and allow researchers to discover what the focus of paedophilic attraction is. In other words what is it about children that paedophiles are attracted to? And how does this relate to other sexual attractions the individual may experience? The twin issues of exclusivity and orientation will be further discussed in the next sub-section.



#### **6.6.4 Paedophilia as a sexual orientation.**

Seto (2012) argues that paedophilia can best be thought of as a sexual age orientation in the same way that people are believed to typically have a sexual gender orientation (i.e. homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual). Seto may well be one of the world's foremost researchers on paedophilia and child sexual abuse, and thus his thoughts warrant serious consideration. Leaving aside the fact that many cultures do not fit into the westernised homosexual/bisexual/heterosexual trichotomy (Meyer, et al., 2010) there is much of value in Seto's argument. In brief, he emphasises the fact that paedophilia is not a choice, any more than heterosexuality is a choice, and thus our responses to it as a society should not include any element of 'blame'. Paedophiles do not choose to have the paraphilia; they can only choose whether or not to act upon it. As such society should focus non-judgemental attention to the issue of paedophilia and provide paedophiles with much-needed emotional support.

Seto seems to be correct in all of these points, and they are points that need to be made. However, in making this argument Seto posits the possibility that paedophilia and teleiophilia (attraction to adults) could be placed upon two axes which exist perpendicular to an axis that represents sexual gender orientation. That is to say that people have both a 'gender' orientation (homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual) and an 'age' orientation (paedophilic, teleiophilic, or both). Thus, in Seto's own example, one can be a heterosexual teleiophile or a homosexual paedophile, not both.

However, the evidence does not seem to support this notion of a paedophilic sexual orientation, because there seem to exist paedophiles who are attracted to adult women and also to both boys and girls. Goode (2009) stated that some of her respondents were indeed heterosexually attracted to adults but bisexually attracted to children. Respondents in the current study made the same assertion (H2C1, H2C22, H2C39). There is no place for these individuals in Seto's theoretical framework.

Seto may respond that the purpose of the orientation is to illustrate the primary focus of desire. He argues that in a situation where an individual is able to choose an ideal sexual partner we would all favour one 'type' over another. But the DSM-5 disagrees. It states that the arousal caused by a paraphilia does not necessarily exceed the arousal caused by normative sexual attraction. It may, but it may not (APA, 2013). One may have an interest in normative sexual partners, and have a lesser interest in the object of the paraphilia, and still meet the diagnostic criteria for a paraphilia or paraphilic disorder. Accordingly, it appears that Seto's

argument for a paedophilic sexual orientation is in need of adaptation. We can explain someone who appears to be both homosexual and heterosexual: they are bisexual. But there is no way to use sexual orientation to explain someone who is both a heterosexual teleiophile and a bisexual paedophile.

One must also ask why paedophilia is the only paraphilia best thought of in this way? Does someone with a rubber fetish have a 'rubber' orientation? Does someone with voyeuristic disorder have a 'window' orientation? It is unclear why paedophilia is the only paraphilia for which an orientation is appropriate. The alternative conception is that paraphilia are sexual interests in objects of desire that exist in addition to any normative sexual desire the individual may have.

Taking that as a starting point, it is far more compelling to view Paedophilia in turn as a fetishisation of certain characteristics that are related to youthfulness. It is 'youthfulness' that is the object of desire, which, for instance, explains why paedophiles who experience heterosexual teleiophilic attraction can be attracted to both boys and girls.

In fact, research compiled for the Congress of the United States of America (United States Sentencing Commission, 2012) about IIOC offenders supports this idea, and how it does so bears some explanation. Firstly, it is important to realise that it seems as if most paedophiles are heterosexual. This appears to be the case for the Congressional report because over 80 percent of the IIOC they researched involved girls. If paedophiles were primarily homosexual, as is sometimes asserted by homophobic individuals (Hunter, 2008), one would expect the trend to go in the opposite direction, and if the majority were bisexual one would expect very few gender differences in the IIOC at all.

Given that there is no apparent reason for this large bias towards one gender, other than the paedophiles themselves desiring that type of IIOC, this would seem to suggest that paedophiles are overwhelmingly heterosexual. Similarly, the preponderance of heterosexual paedophiles is reflected by the current study, because the majority of those who responded to the survey on the H2CW indicated a sexual preference for girls and not boys. So the first point of note is that it appears as if most paedophiles are heterosexual.

The second point is that a certain percentage of heterosexual paedophiles (as was mentioned above) will be teleiophiles and thus attracted to adult women in addition to young girls. These paedophiles are unlikely to be put off by the emergence of secondary sexual

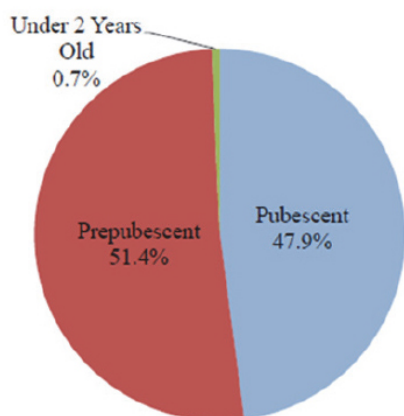
characteristics on girls they observe in IIOC, because those secondary sexual characteristics are not undesirable to them, on women. However, they are likely to be disapproving of the emergence of secondary sexual characteristics in the boys they observe in IIOC, because this would remove the perception of ‘youthfulness’ that they find arousing, if ‘youthfulness’ is indeed the primary focus of a paedophilic attraction.

These are of course merely assumptions, but there is a way to test whether they are accurate. If these assumptions are true then when one examines IIOC as a whole one would expect to find that IIOC involving boys should be slanted towards boys who are pre-pubertal, but IIOC involving girls should not (in line with the above argument that paedophiles with a heterosexual teleiophilic orientation will find male secondary sexual characteristics undesirable).

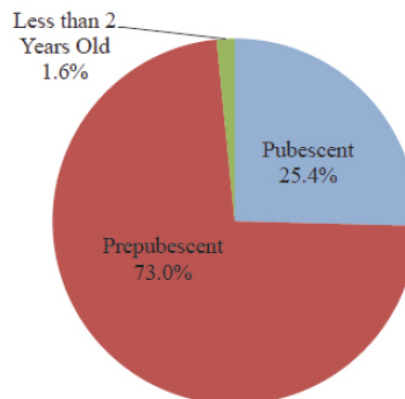
This is precisely what the Congressional report found when they examined data compiled by the UK-based Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) agency (see figure 6.1 below). Over 70 percent of the IIOC they examined that involved boys depicted boys who were before the age of puberty. But the IIOC they examined that involved girls was divided almost perfectly in half between girls who were pre-pubertal and girls who were at the age of puberty.

**Fig. 6.1. Rate of pubescence relative to gender in CEOP database.**

**Age of Female Victims in CEOP Database**



**Age of Male Victims in CEOP Database**



There appear to be two clear explanations for these data. Firstly, it may be the case that paedophiles who are attracted to boys are more likely to be the ‘exclusive’ type, and are thus not attracted to adult men. But there is no evidence that this is the case. A second possibility,

that does seem to be supported by the data (as discussed above), is that a large number of paedophiles are attracted to both boys and girls, but only to adult women. This is why IIOC involving girls includes girls who are undergoing puberty but IIOC involving boys is slanted towards the pre-pubertal. Therefore, it seems as if teleiophilic sexual orientation and paedophilic sexual attraction operate independently of one another. This in turn implies that paedophilia is best thought of as a fetishisation of youth, and not as a separate sexual orientation.

It should be noted however that the paedophiles themselves do not apply this same division. When they speak about what they are attracted to they do not typically differentiate between pubertal and pre-pubertal youths. Instead, they tend to focus on precise ages or age-ranges. For example, PSC54 stated that they were attracted to children between the ages of five and fifteen and PSC8 stated that their age of attraction (AOA) was from four to ten years of age. In other words, PSC54's AOA goes from pre-pubertal to pubertal, and PSC8's begins with toddlers, who are physically very different to the ten-year olds who lie at the higher end of his AOA.

In neither case was a differentiation along pubertal lines evident, and the same trend was observed in the 'pedosurvey' where most respondents preferred to provide precise age ranges in response to the question of what they were attracted to. This suggests a higher degree of nuance than much of the research literature on paedophilic attraction possesses, and this is not unexpected amongst a population that is fixated on children. It is entirely possible that they will be aware of highly subtle (real or perceived) differences among children. These differences may be significant to them in ways that are not apparent to the researcher or the reader. In any event it does appear as if paedophilia is best thought of not as a sexual orientation but rather as a fetishisation of aspects of youth.

### **6.6.5 Supporting paedophiles, not paedophilia.**

Another trend in some of the more recent literature relates to a growing awareness that providing emotional support for individuals grappling with their paedophilia is not only moral but also practical Seto (2012). It was mentioned previously that many of the respondents began visiting the PSCW and H2CW because they felt unfairly excluded and stigmatised by society. Research suggests that this was no exaggeration. Jahnke, Imhoff, and Hoyer (2014) conducted

two surveys in which they examined social stigma around paedophiles, alcoholics, sexual sadists, and people with anti-social personality disorder (APD). What they found was that paedophiles were more deeply stigmatised than any of the other groups. Furthermore, a sizeable number of their respondents (14% in the first survey and 28% in the second) argued that paedophiles should be put to death by the state, even if they had never committed any acts of abuse. In such an environment it is not difficult to see why paedophiles, particularly conservative paedophiles, might feel unfairly victimised.

Similarly, Imhoff (2014) conducted a series of online surveys that compared perceptions of the stigmatisation of paedophiles to that of other groups. Imhoff states that it is typical in research on stigmatisation for respondents to acknowledge that stigmatising others is socially undesirable. For example, one can acknowledge that the visually-impaired are stigmatised by society without endorsing such stigmatisation. However, the respondents in Imhoff's survey displayed precisely the opposite opinion and argued that the stigmatisation of paedophiles is socially desirable. Thus, according to Imhoff, paedophiles are not merely stigmatised. They are stigmatised in a way that no other group experiences. Imhoff et al. (2014) went on to state that the stigmatisation of paedophiles is likely to be one of the factors that prevents paedophiles from obtaining emotional support, and furthermore that this lack of support is likely to increase the chances that a paedophile will act on their urges and sexually abuse a child. Seto (2012) argues that because paedophilia is not voluntary it is irrational to mistreat and withhold support from paedophiles. He further believes that this lack of support puts children at risk and that providing emotional support to paedophiles is not simply moral but is also a practical step toward reducing the rate of child sexual abuse.

#### **6.6.6 A more nuanced approach to classifying paedophilia.**

One of the most central ideas of this thesis is that paedophilia is best understood if it is divided into multiple sub-categories. It is therefore encouraging to see that a number of researchers have already explored this possibility, albeit under conditions that I have argued may have led to methodological difficulties; difficulties that this researcher believes this study has avoided. Babchishin, Hanson, and VanZuylen (2015) conducted a meta-analysis that compared three groups of sexual offenders: online IIOC offenders who (as well as could be established) had never attempted to sexually abuse any children, contact offenders (who were not caught with IIOC), and a control group that had been arrested for both child sexual abuse and the possession

of IIOC. The analysis produced multiple findings of significance. For the purposes of this study what bears noting is that the three groups manifested distinct characteristics.

For example, the online-only offenders manifested more traits that might prevent one from committing child sexual abuse such as greater empathy. In contrast the mixed group seemed to be the one most likely to commit acts of abuse, even more so than the contact-only group. Saleh et al. (2010) moved in a similar direction to this study by exploring the possible links between paedophilia, sexual sadism, and anti-social personality disorder. What was found was that while many links are suspected, precise details are difficult to determine. Seto (2004) has also argued, as this thesis does, that a separate diagnostic category for paedophiles who manifest seemingly psychopathic characteristics should be created.

There is also research that argues on other grounds for the existence of sub-types of paedophiles and child sexual offenders. Beech and Harkins (2012) conducted a detailed review of the demographic data relating to all DSM-IV-TR paraphilia and found that there were multiple factors that could potentially be used to divide paedophiles into different categories. Many of these were mirrored by the soon-to-be-released DSM-5 specifiers (such as the gender of the children they are attracted to) whereas others were not (such as the previously mentioned question of whether the paedophile is attracted only to pre-pubertal children or to pubertal children as well).

Neutze, Grundmann, Scherner, and Beier (2012) similarly found noticeable differences between individuals who had been charged with a sexual offence and those who had committed sexual offences in the past but had not been charged. They interviewed a group that contained both paedophiles and ‘hebephiles’ (i.e. individuals who are attracted to children around the age of puberty) and found that while the two groups were very similar certain detectable differences existed as well. Tewksbury, Jennings, and Zgoba (2012) have argued that sexual offenders as a whole are best thought of in terms of a ‘high risk’ group and a ‘low risk’ group, with the ‘high risk’ group displaying far more anti-social traits. Beauregard (2010) similarly stated that sexual offenders who score highly on the Psychopathy Check List, Revised (PCL-R) are more likely to commit crimes in the future than those who do not.

Meridian, Curtis, Thakker, Wilson, and Boer (2013) have likewise produced their own typology specifically for Internet-based IIOC offenders (CPOs). They break CPOs into two main categories “fantasy-driven” and “contact-driven”. The primary difference between the two categories is that the latter is focused on finding ways to engage in acts of child sexual

abuse, rather than being satisfied with IIOC alone. The “fantasy-driven” type is then further broken down into four sub-categories. What is significant for this thesis is that Meridian et al.’s two main categories are very similar to the separation made between “active” and “conservative” in the eight categories of the typology produced by the current study.

This may be further evidence in support of the idea that paedophiles who wish to act on their paraphilia are in some ways different from those who do not. Setting aside the much-repeated issue of the conflation of the terms “paedophile”, “sexual offender”, and “child sexual abuser”, the point remains that many researchers are investigating the possibility that all three of those groups can be meaningfully divided into sub-categories, that manifest different characteristics.

## **6.7 Possible Directions for Future Research.**

There are multiple avenues for future research relating to this thesis, and these are discussed over the next few pages.

### **6.7.1 Degrees of ‘severity’.**

Lee, Li, Lamade, Schuler, and Prentky (2012) investigated differences between contact and non-contact IIOC offenders and found that the two groups were quite dissimilar. They had a large degree of internal variation in behaviour, personality, beliefs, and so on. One of the findings was that contact IIOC offenders appeared in some ways to have a more “severe” form of paedophilia, if such a thing can be said to exist. In addition to being more likely to want to sexually abuse children they were also more likely to store IIOC instead of simply viewing it and discarding it. Similarly, those that had IIOC collections tended to have larger collections than the non-contact IIOC offenders. Even though possession of IIOC was the non-contact offenders’ only known offence, the contact offenders’ collections of IIOC were larger. Most significantly, while both groups possessed both IIOC and adult pornography, the contact offenders tended to have a much larger amount of IIOC, relative to the amount of adult IIOC. In other words, it seems that they were less likely to be able to find sexual release from viewing adult pornography than the non-contact offenders. This once again highlights an issue raised above: the question of whether individuals who are exclusively paedophilic (as opposed to both paedophilic and teleiophilic) are more likely to want to act on their urges, and if so whether



this is because they are unable to find sexual release from adults. The implications of these questions are far-reaching (and this may be one of the reasons why the DSM-5 included the ‘exclusive vs. non-exclusive’ specifier in the diagnostic criteria for paedophilic disorder).

If it could be determined that people who are exclusively paedophilic can only find sexual release from either IIOC or children themselves, then the question must be asked: what should be done to prevent them from committing acts of child sexual abuse? Further research into these issues, particularly the question of whether there are ‘degrees of severity’ for the paraphilic disorders, could be of great interest.

### **6.7.2 Female paedophiles.**

Recently, there has been an increase in the amount of research looking at paedophiles and child sexual abusers who are female, and some of this research has clear relevance to this study. For example, Pflugradt and Allen (2012) looked specifically at female sexual offenders, who had been diagnosed with sexual sadism. They identified multiple psychological, social, and behavioural factors that suggest that the manifestation of sexual sadism that these women display is fundamentally different to that presented by men. Even though the respondents in the study did not appear to have paedophilia this still introduces the intriguing possibility that sex may differently influence the behaviour of pedosadists.

Additionally, Schulz, Bergen, Schuhmann, Hoyer, and Santtila (2015) conducted research on adults who were engaged in online sexual activity, with people who were below the age of sexual consent. They found that a substantial percentage of the adults they identified were women. If these findings are accurate then it implies that female child sexual abusers are, like their male counterparts, using new technology to identify victims. Further research in this area could be of value, particularly since female child sexual abusers seem to be more difficult to identify (Kramer & Bowman, 2011).

### **6.7.3 Confirming the findings of this thesis.**

The most important avenue for further research that might be prompted by this study would be research aimed at determining whether the findings and implications of the study are indeed valid. The exploration of the behaviour displayed by paedophiles on the PSCW (presented in



chapter 4) mainly repeated and expanded on the findings of other researchers such as Knight and Prentky (1990), Hudson and Ward (1998, 1998b), Durkin and Bryant (1999), Seto (2004), Howitt and Sheldon (2007), Beier, et al. (2009), Goode (2009), and others. This suggests that those findings are likely to be valid since they are primarily an expansion of what has already been determined.

However, while other researchers have already argued that sadistic paedophiles may be fundamentally different from other paedophiles the statement that they are best thought of as a different sub-category may be an over-extrapolation of the evidence. This is particularly possible, given that this study was based on only two websites. Furthermore, the concomitant claims that some sadistic paedophiles have enough empathy to dissuade them from acting on their beliefs, and should form another category still, should be researched to determine its validity.

Arguably the most significant implication of this study is the creation of a typology of potential child physical and sexual abusers, that divides them into eight categories and sub-categories based on their desires and behaviour. Some of these categories are well established in the literature (e.g. the ‘opportunistic child sexual abusers’ such as non-paedophile incest offenders) but others are not (the above mentioned ‘conservative pedosadists’). Given what is known in the literature this typology certainly seems to be both valid and valuable. But that does not mean that this is in fact the case.

To put it plainly: it makes sense, but that does not mean it is true. Further research aimed at validating or invalidating the eight categories, and determining whether they are useful to researchers, will be needed. If it is determined that the eight categories are valid and useful then additional research that studies them further could likewise be of value. Furthermore, there is also the possibility that there exist other categories that this research has not identified. For example, it is possible that opportunistic sexual abusers (i.e. non-paedophiles who nevertheless sexually abuse children) may be divisible into a ‘typical’ type with intact empathy who would cease their abuse if they realised it was causing harm, and an ‘indifferent’ type. This type is not dissuaded by the suffering of their victims but are similarly not further aroused by it, the way that a sadist would be. In other words, whilst opportunistic sexual abusers most certainly exist, there may exist within them sub-categories that have not been identified. If the proposed typology truly intends to be a comprehensive system of

classification of potential physical and sexual abusers of children, then these possible additional categories should be explored.

#### 6.7.4 Empathy, cognitive deficits, and cognitive distortions.

There are other issues that were beyond the scope of this research that later researchers may also wish to examine. For example, it is possible that “indifferent pedosexuals” (non-sadistic paedophiles who are not discouraged by visible pain and discomfort on the part of their victims) may be similar to “active pedosadists”, in their disregard for the wellbeing of others. It is possible that “concerned pedosexuals” and “conservative pedosadists” share both paedophilia and a normal range of empathy. The only difference between them may be the presence or lack of a sadistic paraphilia. In fact if one maps certain key characteristics of the eight categories some interesting potential trends emerge.

**Table 6.1: Key Characteristics of the Eight Proposed Types of Child Abuser**

	Would abuse?	Intact Empathy?	Are they sadistic?	Are they paedophilic?	Cognitively distorted?
Opportunistic Sexual Abuser	X	X			X
Opportunistic Physical Abuser	X		X		
Active Pedosexual	X	X		X	X
Conservative Pedosexual		X		X	
Indifferent Pedosexual	X			X	
Active Pedosadist	X		X	X	
Conservative Pedosadist		X	X	X	

The characteristics examined are:

- Would they commit acts of abuse if they could?
- Do they appear to have intact empathy?
- Are they sadistic?
- Are they paedophilic?
- Do they manifest cognitive distortions?

If this breakdown is accurate then it appears that if a paedophile wishes to act on their urges then they either need to subscribe to cognitive distortions that rationalise their behaviour, or they must have impaired empathy. This implies that if empathy is normally distributed among pedosadists then conservative pedosadists should outnumber active pedosadists, because cognitive distortions that rationalise their behaviour are difficult to maintain. For example, one of the main cognitive distortions used by paedophiles is the belief that the abuse is experienced as pleasurable for the victim, and furthermore that this ‘enjoyment’ proves that the abuse is not harmful (Paquette, Cortoni, Proulx & Longré, 2014). Pedosadists, for the most part, do not have access to this supportive cognitive distortion for two reasons. Firstly, given the severity of the harm they are inflicting it is not possible for them to believe that what they are doing is being enjoyed by their victim. Secondly, their primary desire is to cause harm, which by definition is not something the victim can enjoy. They can only take pleasure in the abuse if they know that it is unpleasant for the victim.

Similarly, other cognitive distortions that pedosexuals may use are also difficult for pedosadists to maintain. For example, there is the common techniques of condemning those who condemn them. This distortion requires the pedosadist to claim that they should not be condemned by others, because there is nothing wrong with what they are doing, and some of the respondents did attempt to do this. For example, H2C55 told another user that they shouldn’t be afraid to hurt a child because “if you love her you can’t do anything irreversible with her”. It is difficult to miss the disjunction between the abuser’s belief that they “love” their victim, and the further belief that this love seemingly justifies torturing them (because it will somehow prevent long-term harm). In the absence of cognitive deficits, it must surely be difficult for an individual with intact empathy to maintain this distortion. Thus, it seems likely that pedosadists may not have access to cognitive distortions that rationalise and justify their

behaviour. If they have intact empathy it is likely to be difficult for them to find ways to excuse their actions to themselves or others.

A lack of empathy may not be the only significant factor involved in predicting whether a pedosadist will act on their urges. It is well established in the literature that many sexual and physical abusers conduct their abuse while under the influence of alcohol or narcotics. Similarly, there is some evidence linking child physical and sexual abusers with poor impulse control (DiChristina, 2009; Kärge et al., 2016). In fact, Finkelhor and Araji (1986) argued in their original model of child sexual abuse that abuse could only take place if the individual was exposed to a factor that removed their inhibitions. Amongst the many possible factors listed were alcohol abuse (to which one can surely add substance abuse in general), impulse control disorders, and factors that cause cognitive impairment such as senility or psychosis.

Finkelhor and Araji's model has not been used very often in recent research, because more newer studies have demonstrated that cognitive distortions do most of the work in shielding sexual abusers from guilt over their actions (Paquette, Cortoni, Proulx & Longpré, 2014). For example, Quayle and Taylor's (2003) model of problematic internet use by paedophiles is more helpful to the researcher because it includes both the effect of new technology and the impact of interpersonal factors (e.g. active paedophiles convincing others to perform acts of abuse). However, it is possible that Finkelhor and Araji's model may be able to explain how pedosadists come to act on their desires.

In any case it may be that sadistic paedophiles can only act on their urges if they are subject to some factor that overcomes most people's reticence to hurt a child. So further research into the links between abuse, empathy, sadism, and cognitive distortions might provide valuable insight into factors that prevent pedosadists and pedosexuals from acting their urges. This could in turn be used to inform therapeutic processes with these individuals.

#### **6.7.5 Conflation and separation in prior research.**

The discussion of older research also raises a further issue that may be worthy of exploration: the possible impact of the conflation of pedosadists and pedosexuals on prior research. As was mentioned above it is possible that pedosadists have always been included in research on paedophilia, and it is likely that if they were they would take great care to hide their sadistic

nature. This raises the prospect that research on paedophilia has been affected by the conflation of pedosexuals and pedosadists under the same heading of ‘paedophile’.

The conflicting findings across research may lend credence to this ‘conflation’ theory. As one example, if one again looks back at Finkelhor and Araji, and compares their research to more recent research on paedophiles, one notices significant discrepancies. Many of the factors that they and their peers of the time claimed were typical of paedophiles (poor education, poor impulse control, a history of violence, a tendency to abuse narcotics, a history of criminal acts both related to sexual abuse or otherwise, and so on) do not, in fact, appear typical at all. More recent research suggests that these links are tenuous (Seto, 2004; Cantor, Blanchard, Robichaud, & Christensen, 2005; Goode, 2009), and that those older findings may have been caused by a lack of representative samples, because they tended to use clinical and forensic populations (Ray, Kimonis & Donoghue, 2010).

This explanation ties in with the current study in the following way: Before society became sensitised to the issue of child physical and sexual abuse it was difficult for the legal profession to convict child abusers of a crime. This was especially true since many forms of sexual contact between adults and children remained legal, until more than halfway through the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Foucault, 1976; Frank, Camp & Boutcher, 2010). Additionally, sentences for child abuse have generally become harsher over time (Levenson & Morin, 2006).

What this means is that the clinical or forensic samples of paedophiles that were used in older research would have contained an unrepresentative percentage of paedophiles. Furthermore, even instances of the most extreme forms of abuse were less likely to be reported. If this is true, then it is likely that these populations would have included active pedosadists. Thus, it may be the case that all prior research on paedophilia that included clinical and forensic samples should be re-examined, in order to determine whether this sampling bias did in fact occur, and what the implications of that may be.

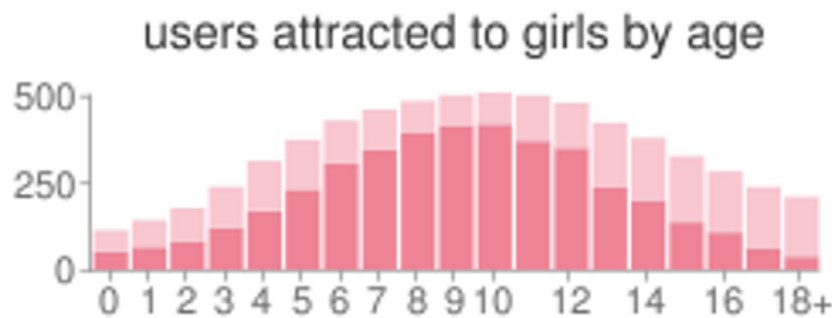
#### **6.7.6 Is paedophilic age of attraction (AOA) subject to normal distribution?**

One final issue that that may be worthy of further research, relates to the issue of age of attraction (AOA) discussed above. During the course of the research on the PSCW a user posted a link to an image on an external image host. Comments in the thread indicated that it was not pornographic and so the link was followed by the researcher, and an image

downloaded. It turned out to be a graph from “Lolita City”, which was likely to have been the largest storehouse of IIOC ever to exist on the darknet. The OP described how the image had originally been posted by the administrators of Lolita City and was most assuredly genuine.

They explained that every image on Lolita City had data attached to it that indicated the perceived age of the victims in the IIOC. This was to make it easier for the site’s members to search for the age ranges they were most aroused by. The image which had been linked to from the PSCW was a graph that depicted which ages appeared to be the most popular on the site. The graph is simple, but its implications may be of great importance.

**Fig. 6.2. Age ranges of the victims of IIOC on “Lolita City”.**



The data appear to form normal distribution, roughly around the age of ten. If this is true then it would imply that ten represents something of a “typical” age of attraction for paedophiles, and that attraction to other ages becomes increasingly less likely the further away from the age of ten one moves. The graph also seems to ‘lean’ towards the higher ages, and this may be in line with the above discussion of how some paedophiles are also attracted to adult women. It must be noted that these data are impossible to verify, or even fully understand, and there are many questions about the data that cannot be answered.

For example, there is no explanation of what the two different shades of pink represent. Furthermore, there is no indication of how the data were gathered or manipulated. Were users placed into a category according to which ages they looked at most often, or were all the users’ total age ranges combined and averaged out? Is the graph actually about the users’ preferences or does it instead show which images were accessed most often, which is not quite the same thing? In spite of this uncertainty, the data is certainly intriguing. The possibilities that can be inferred from the graph are beyond the scope of this study. But further research aimed at

verifying such data, or re-sourcing its equivalent, and studying its implications could be of great value.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

Paedophilia continues to be a controversial and under-researched paraphilia. After a thorough examination of the research literature it was found that the current literature on paedophilia may be potentially problematic in a number of ways. One example was the confusion over the use of terms that overlap one another but that each mean different things. Similarly, it was found that the legal profession and the academic study of paedophilia operate quite differently. It was also found that evidence exists to suggest that politics may be influencing the ways in which paedophilia is diagnosed and treated, as well as the ways in which child sexual abuse is responded to by the psychological, medical, and law enforcement professions.

Due to the difficulty of identifying individuals with paedophilia researchers often have difficulty gaining access to representative samples. This problem is further complicated by the strong incentive that paedophiles have to lie about their desires and activities. It was decided that a possible solution to this problem would be to conduct research in an environment where paedophiles have an incentive to be open with others, under a strong assumption of anonymity. A number of websites for paedophiles exist on both the conventional Internet and the so-called ‘deep web’; a collection of websites that are hidden from search engines and that can only be accessed by using specialised software. Prior research conducted on the Internet and in treatment programs revealed that many paedophiles feel a strong desire to express themselves and be heard but cannot do so due to the stigma associated with their condition.

It was posited that this might lead them to darknet websites where they can speak more freely with other paedophiles whose experiences will be similar to their own. A darknet website was identified that seemed well suited for research: ‘The Pedophile Support Community’ website (PSCW). It was ideal for research because it did not host any illegal content, because rich data could be gathered from the many discussions that took place there, and because it was probably the largest website of its type in the world. A grounded theoretic research program was planned and begun.

While still in the initial stages of coding it was noted that the respondents claimed that there was a second website of interest that was aimed at a different ‘type’ of paedophile: The

‘Hurt 2 the Core’ website (H2CW). In line with the principles of grounded theory the study followed where the data led and the second website was tentatively investigated. After taking care that the researcher would not be exposed to any illegal content, nor violate either the law or ethical guidelines, this second website was included as part of the research study.

What was found on the PSCW was that the users’ beliefs about their attraction to children could be summarised by a phrase that would become the core category of the first part of the grounded theoretic analysis: “it’s not about sexual abuse”. This phrase conveys the argument that the members of the PSCW frequently make: that their actions towards children are not merely about sex, but are about a more general love for children that can be both sexual and platonic. Secondly, the core category expresses the idea (that most of the respondents held to be true) that there is a way of engaging in sexual contact with a child that is not ‘abusive’ in any way. The arguments that they make for these ideas, and the ways in which the evidence they provided contradicts them, was discussed in depth.

In addition, the role of the demonization of paedophiles in the popular media, and society in general, was explored and it was argued that it constitutes a form of social stigma. It was explained how this stigma has led to the dominant social construction of paedophiles as being ‘monstrous’ figures. It was then argued that this construction is in conflict with many paedophiles’ perception of themselves, and that they feel that it cannot serve as an identity. Consequently, many paedophiles are left feeling that they need to construct a new identity for themselves. The only place where this can occur would be somewhere that paedophiles can speak openly about their desires and actions. A paedophile website on the darknet, like the PSCW, is one of the few spaces within which this can take place.

The structure of the website was explained as a means to facilitate a deeper understanding of the analysis that followed. It was found that the site can be thought of as having been representative of the various needs of the members in terms of their desire for community, emotional support, paedophilic sexual satisfaction, defence against identification by law enforcement or loved ones, and general administration to keep the site running smoothly. It was also found that the site was indeed a space in which paedophiles are seeking to construct an acceptable identity for themselves.

The precise characteristics of the PSCW’s new construction of the paedophile was discussed in depth. It was found that this construction had been created to be a deliberate inversion of the construction of the paedophile that predominates in society. Whereas society



argues that paedophiles cause great harm to children, the paedophiles argued that their identity is centred around not causing any harm at all. While society describes paedophiles as being victimisers of children the paedophiles described themselves as being the victims of society's oppression, and so on.

It was reasoned that since the popular social construction of the paedophile as a "monstrous" figure is not accurate in terms of the research on paraphilia, that an identity whose characteristics are determined by inverting this flawed construction is likely to be inaccurate as well. It was posited that the primary benefit of this new construction of the paedophile lay not in any claimed accuracy but rather in its utility as a defence mechanism against the hostile social environment in which paedophiles find themselves. Additionally, certain key facets of the beliefs and behaviour of the PSCW's members were discussed. These included the arguments that they made in defence of child sexual abuse, the emergence of the self-named "conservative" paedophiles who are committed to not performing abusive acts, the propensity of the PSCW's members to possess IIOC, the intriguing possibility that paedophiles' sexual interests may fluctuate over time, and the danger that a website like the PSCW may encourage inactive paedophiles to engage in child sexual abuse.

The subsequent results chapter contained the second part of the grounded theoretic analysis. It introduced the 'Hurt 2 the Core' Website (H2CW). The similarities and differences between the PSCW and H2CW were briefly discussed. The bulk of the chapter was devoted to a comparison between the typical members of the two websites. This was framed in terms of their beliefs about child abuse and childhood sexuality, the role of relationships, their beliefs about the importance of self-control (or the lack of it), their response to guilt, and the ways in which they excused or justified their own actions. This culminated in the argument that the more typical representatives of the two sites' members are best thought of as being two distinct types of paedophile. The first is the 'pedosexual' who seeks to minimise harm and can only act on their sexual desires if they are convinced (often due to cognitive distortions) that harm is not being caused. And the second type, the 'pedosadist', fetishizes the infliction of pain and trauma, and can only achieve sexual satisfaction if they believe that harm is indeed being caused.

Following this proposition, the data were re-examined in order to see whether the respondents truly did fall neatly into one of these two categories. Through a thorough exploration of the coded responses, as well as incorporating a survey that was conducted on

the H2CW, it was found that while most of the respondents did fall into either the pedosexual or pedosadist sub-type, there were also other members of the site who did not. Through an exploration of the facets that separated these anomalous groups from the main groups, and by combining the study's data with the research literature on child physical and sexual abuse, a typology of potential child physical and sexual abusers was tentatively proposed. This typology led to the creation of the second core category of the grounded theoretic analysis: "four key questions".

It is these four questions that make it potentially possible to separate child physical and sexual abusers into categories based upon paedophilic attraction, sadistic tendencies, their desire to commit acts of abuse, and whether the realisation of the harm they are inflicting would make them cease the abuse.

This proposed typology divided participants into eight, as follows:

- Opportunistic Sexual Abusers
- Conservative Pedosexuals
- Active Pedosexuals
- Indifferent Pedosexuals
- Concerned Pedosexuals
- Opportunistic Sadistic Abusers
- Active Pedosadists
- Conservative Pedosadists

The thesis concluded by comparing the findings of this study with the research literature as whole, laying out the strengths and weaknesses of the study, and identifying potential avenues for further research.

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## Appendix A

This appendix provides a list of key terms, abbreviations, and jargon that are necessary to understand this study. Each entry will also provide some additional context for the term's use. Many of these entries do not contain cited sources because they refer to findings that were made as part of this research. Others constitute common knowledge. Throughout the thesis reminders of the meanings of key terms will be given but it is recommended that the reader make a note of this page so that it can be referred back to with ease.

Blog: contraction of 'web log'. These are non-fiction online publications in which a creator shares their thoughts via the Web. There is also a more complex form which is the 'vlog' which consists of video recordings of an individual's musings around various issues.

Cleartnet: the normal, freely accessible Internet (i.e. not the "darknet" or the "deep web").

IIOC: Internet shorthand for "IIOC" (Ray, Kimonis & Donoghue, 2010). IIOC is also sometimes euphemistically referred to through the use of other terms that abbreviate to "IIOC". For example, 'cheese pizza' is sometimes used as a code for IIOC that the uninitiated will not understand. The current study did not involve exposure to any IIOC, but it is, rather predictably, a topic that was discussed at length by the study's participants.

Darknet: Websites and other content that are distinct from the regular Internet, because they are not indexed by search engines and can only be accessed using specialised software such as TOR or Freenet. The darknet is one part of the 'deep web'. Please see the next entry.

Deep web: A much mythologised collection of websites and other content that are not indexed by search engines. Most of the things on the deep web are benign and consist of content that is private and thus not accessible by just anyone, such as emails and social media accounts (Casserly, 2015).

Download: to obtain a digital copy of content across the Internet, typically via a website but also through 'P2P' services (see below) and other methods. In brief 'downloading' refers to taking content from someone else and 'uploading' refers to making one's own content available to others.

Internet forum: a website intended as a place for the discussion of a particular topic or set of topics. They are usually divided into sections and sub-sections that each relate to a particular

issue. A thematic breakdown of the format of the PSCW (see below), that makes this structure apparent, has been included as Appendix A.

Freedom Hosting: one of the world's largest 'no questions asked' web hosting services. It was responsible for 'hosting' (see below) both of the websites used in this study (Best, 2014).

Freenet: an anonymizing, darknet service, similar to TOR. It was used by Sarah Goode to make contact with paedophiles for her study (2009).

H2CW: the 'Hurt 2 the Core' Website. It was most likely the largest 'hurtcore' (see below) website on TOR. It was a locus for the discussion, creation, and dissemination of sadistic IIOC. It was one of two websites researched for this study.

Hacker: a cybercriminal who robs, defaces, or otherwise threatens websites and other online content for their own personal gain.

Hactivist: this term denotes an individual or group who uses some of the techniques employed by 'hackers' to promote social issues. A prominent example includes some of the actions of the collective known as 'Anonymous' (Casserly, 2015).

Hosting: this is the act of making a website accessible to others, typically via the Internet. This is done through the use of a hosting service who is paid to make the site available and manage the traffic to and from it.

Hurtcore: sadistic IIOC. It consists of photographs and video that record the sexual torture of children. The word is a portmanteau of the words 'hurt' and 'hardcore'.

An internet: any group of computers that are linked together.

The Internet: a massive network of globally-interconnected computers. It incorporates websites, email, P2P software, and many other technological tools. It is different to 'the world wide web' but is often spoken of as if the terms are synonymous.

IM: abbreviation for 'instant messaging' which is a form of semi-synchronous online communication. It refers to any service that allows members to send messages to one another quickly enough to facilitate a real-time, virtual conversation. This can be contrasted with asynchronous forms of electronic communication such as email where the assumption is that the sender will need to wait for a response.

LEA: abbreviation for 'Law Enforcement Agent'. It refers to any member of any law enforcement agency. The term carries connotations of subterfuge and entrapment. It is also sometimes represented as "LEO" for 'Law Enforcement Officer'.

Nick: a nickname, or alias. It is typically the name that the user applies to the profile they use to gain access to a website. Some members use the same 'nick' across multiple sites.

OP: short for "Original Poster", the person who starts a discussion thread by posting the initial question, comment, or content that then sparks a debate.

P2P: short for "Peer to Peer". These are forms of software that are designed to facilitate the sharing of digital content between two or more users. It is sometimes used as a means of sharing illegal content because censorship of the Web has little effect on it since, by its very nature, it does not take place on the Web (i.e. via a website) but rather directly between users.

Post: to upload something to a website. This term is most often used for the simple written messages that collectively comprise discussion 'threads' but it can refer to the providing of any online content.

PSCW: the 'Pedophile Support Community' Website [sic], a non-pornographic website on TOR for self-identified paedophiles to discuss matters of mutual interest. It was one of two websites used for this study.

Profile: the visible portion of a membership account on a website. Typically it involves a nickname or 'nick' that becomes the users' online identity.

Profile picture: an image that is tied to a membership account (a profile) and serves to allow users to easily differentiate between one another's posts.

Real Time: something that takes approximately the same amount of time in an online space as in an offline one. For example email conversations are not like face-to-face conversations because they do not take place in real time. They can take hours, days, or even longer. However, IM conversations take roughly the same amount of time as a face to face conversation so they can be said to take place in 'real time'.

Screenshot: in essence an electronic 'photograph' of a website that depicts whatever the viewer was seeing on their computer screen.

Snapchat: an IM service that is popular because the messages are automatically deleted after a period of time specified by the sender. Unfortunately, software exists that allows unscrupulous users to download the messages in spite of this feature.

Thread: an online discussion that takes place on a website. These are typically a series of written 'posts' in response to an 'original post'. This term can refer to any form of written online discussion on most websites.

Thumbnail: a small 'preview' of a larger image, or video. It is standard practice to speed up websites by loading small preview images instead of full-sized ones. Typically, the user 'clicks' the small 'thumbnail' image that corresponds to the content they are looking for. This triggers the opening of the full-sized image, or video. In this way the user's computer and Internet connection are not taxed by downloading unnecessary content.

TOR: 'The Onion Router'. TOR is an anonymizing software promoted and maintained by free speech activists as a means for members of oppressed populations to circumvent Internet censorship. It is also used by individuals for suspect or even openly criminal activities (Kiss, 2013). TOR is the software used by this researcher to access the websites used in this research.

Upload: to add media (e.g. pictures, video, documents etc.) to a website.

Web page: an interactive virtual document.

Web site: a collection of web pages that together form a single online space.

World Wide Web: a massive collection of websites, accessible via the Internet. The 'Web' is different to the Internet because while the Web consists only of websites the Internet also includes email, P2P software, various forms of IM, and a variety of other online services.

## Appendix B

An Illustration of how the Sections of the PSCW can be Divided into ‘Clusters’.

	Administration	Sexual Abuse	Support	Community	Defence	Posts
Notice Board	<b>X</b>					<b>2 360</b>
Introductions	<b>X</b>					<b>18</b>
Monthly Review				<b>X</b>		<b>873</b>
Community Awards				<b>X</b>		<b>30</b>
Pedo Chat		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>22 713</b>
Child Love Support		<b>X</b>				<b>5 422</b>
Personal Support			<b>X</b>			<b>5 063</b>
Conservative Paedophilia			<b>X</b>			<b>961</b>
Off Topic				<b>X</b>		<b>7 318</b>
Security and Computer					<b>X</b>	<b>5 202</b>
Guides		<b>X</b>			<b>X</b>	<b>549</b>
Crime and Punishment					<b>X</b>	<b>444</b>
Model Discussion		<b>X</b>				<b>603</b>
						<b>Total: 50 656</b>

## Appendix C

### An Anonymized Excerpt From a Discussion on the PSCW.

TOPIC: SUICIDE (READ 1310 TIMES)

 **Re: Suicide**  
« Reply #15 on: February 18, 2012, 05:16:52 am »

I've fought depression all of my life.  
Getting medicated was the best decision I have ever made. Hands down. No contest.  
I also luckily enough, on my 4th try in 10 years, found a therapist that worked. She worked at a place that was very progressive, and new-age in their thinking which is what lead me there.  
So I can say I am in a much better place.  
But if my mother hadn't instilled in me this crazy sense of self-preservation, who knows how many times I could have tried to do it. Lord knows I wanted out. But I'm at peace now. Kinda zen. It's nice. I urge everybody to try to get yourself right.  
And for the sake of all that's holy, don't ever deny yourself the option of medication. Some of us aren't born with great brain chemistry. When you find something that sets you right, it fucking sets you right.  
I've done it. Best decision I ever made in my life.

Logged

 **Re: Suicide**  
« Reply #16 on: February 18, 2012, 10:02:46 am »

Up until recently I never even thought of suicide. I had a brief moment where I entertained the notion but it quickly faded. I soon realized what I was pondering was extremely out of character for me and now everything is fine. While I feel I am mentally stable my suicidal thought was brought on by guilt.



Logged

 **Re: Suicide**  
« Reply #17 on: February 18, 2012, 02:49:44 pm »

I thought about this as a teen, since I knew what I was becoming and I was knew my family would accept me. But suicide is a waste, and selfish to yourself and others. Bottom line, you may be guaranteed only 1 ONE UNO ICHI life on earth, and like the fifth option said if it gets that bad start a new life. Don't let society tell you that you are unfit for the life you have been given. Who are they to judge? Be yourself, love yourself, today may be the most horrifying day...but you will be blessed with a tomorrow. That right others aren't so lucky to have.

Logged

 **Re: Suicide**  
« Reply #18 on: February 18, 2012, 04:18:20 pm »


**Quote from: McFly on February 18, 2012, 05:16:52 am**

I also luckily enough, on my 4th try in 10 years, found a therapist that worked. She worked at a place that was very progressive, and new-age in their thinking which is what lead me there.

That's awesome that you found a therapist that worked for you. I've been through 7, including the court mandated ones. The trouble I've always had with psychotherapy is that apparently I am "too intellectual"

Logged

 **Re: Suicide**  
« Reply #19 on: February 19, 2012, 12:36:20 pm »

**Quote from:  on February 18, 2012, 04:18:20 pm**

That's awesome that you found a therapist that worked for you. I've been through 7, including the court mandated ones. The trouble I've always had with psychotherapy is that apparently I am "too intellectual"


I think that a part of the problem is being able to look at things in a different way when you have a higher IQ. The other issue is with the psychotherapy itself. To use an example, many sex offender courses will not work if your IQ is below a certain number (you cannot understand the concepts involved), and seem trivial when it is above another certain number (you understand all to well what is happening, and can think beyond/see through what they are saying). I know that courses like that offered by AA use religion as a placebo, where it is the crutch you use to move away from drinking, but I don't know much about psychological counseling for depression to make a comment on what is specifically involved in it.

Logged

"Is there a little girl here all by herself? Daddy needs to get his rocks off. I'm here to see my little girl. I need to show her Daddy's Thing." ~ Dr. Tobias Fünke

"Okay, are you forgetting that I was a professional twice over- an analyst and a therapist. The world's first analapist." ~ Dr. Tobias Fünke

 **Re: Suicide**  
« Reply #20 on: February 22, 2012, 06:19:27 am »

**Quote from:  on February 17, 2012, 11:56:57 pm**

Mental illness itself is seen as something to be ashamed of in society, and members of a family with serious depression, bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia, or any other mental issue are usually only spoken about in hushed tones or in gossip. The sooner people face the fact that mental illnesses are nothing to be ashamed of, and that people with them cannot deal with their condition without outside assistance a lot of the time, the better. I know a few people with mental illnesses (one even goes psychotic if he stops his medication), and they are interesting to say the least. It's horrible watching someone suffer, yet knowing I cannot heal them, but the least we can do is to offer support in whatever way we can.

I think that there is a value behind the shame that is associated with mental disease. First, I want to say that I don't think shaming people with mental disease is the best option, but I think it lends itself to a healthier society from what I see in the people around me. Many of the 'sick' people I see (mainly targeting ADHD, bipolar, low-grade autism, depression, and similar mental disorders that are 'low grade' and at first don't prevent one from holding a job) do not motivate themselves in any way to escape the mental disorder. They do not like being diseased, but they do not put forth the effort to escape the disease either. They aquire learned helplessness.

I think back to the people that helped me the most escape my depression, and they are not the people who patted me on the back and 'supported' me. Also, they are not the people who insulted my condition. The people who helped me the most are the people who asserted that I had more in me, and that I was able to help myself. They held me to a higher (but not too much higher) standard than I held myself to. And eventually, I started holding my abilities in higher regard, and I was able to escape.

Logged

## Appendix D

### A Proposed Typology of Potential Child Physical and Sexual Abusers.

